With a new introduction by **Harvey C. Mansfield**

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Daniel J. Mahoney and **Brian C. Anderson**

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Religion is the sigh of the creature overwhelmed by misfortune, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

KARL MARX

Marxism is undoubtedly a religion, in the lowest sense of the word. Like every inferior form of the religious life it has been continually used, to borrow the apt phrase of Marx himself, as an opiate for the people.

SIMONE WEIL

FOREWORD TO THE TRANSACTION EDITION

THE OPIUM OF THE INTELLECTUALS is the sixth book by Raymond Aron to be published by Transaction Publishers and the fifth in the "Aron series" inaugurated with the republication of *In Defense of Decadent Europe* in 1996. The series' aim is to make available Aron's principal writings, with new introductions that highlight their continuing relevance and, where appropriate, with additional materials that clarify the intention of the original works.

The publication of the new Transaction edition of *The Opium of the Intellectuals* is a particularly significant moment for the series. *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955) is undoubtedly Aron's most famous work—incredibly, however, it has been out-of-print for years—though it remains better known than read. Even sympathetic critics too often pigeonhole it as a skeptical assault on political rationalism or as a complacent defense of "the end of ideology." Few commentators have studied it with sufficient care to observe that its skepticism is aimed not at truth, but at the nihilism that propels ideological fanaticism in our age. Aron's "skeptical" assault on the myths of the left, the proletariat, and the revolution, and his philosophical dissection of "the idolatry of history," are at the service of restoring political judgment to its rightful place as the guardian of the human world. In his introduction to the present volume, Professor Harvey Mansfield of Harvard University highlights both *Opium's* remarkable contribution to clear thinking during the Cold War and its permanent contribution to understanding the intellectual foundations of non-utopian thought and action. This edition also includes a 1956 text by Aron, "Fanaticism, Prudence, and Faith," that responds to the critics of the original edition of *The Opium of the Intellectuals* and illuminates the Aronian understanding of political judgment. This text is Aron's magisterial response to the efforts by Sartre and other French intellectuals to fuse Marxist historicism and existentialist commitment in a way that abandons any concern with political moderation and prudence. In it Aron supplements and explains the intention of *The Opium of the Intellectuals,* and makes clear that his own conservative-minded liberalism is not rooted in radical skepticism about principles per se but in a legitimate skepticism about "schemes, models and Utopias." As Mansfield makes clear in his introduction, Aron's powerful critique of the fusion of Marx and Nietzsche, of "doctrinairism" and "existentialism," in the thought of his time continues

to speak to the irresponsibility and incoherence of "postmodernist" thought in ours.

It is fitting for us to close with an expression of thanks to those who have made this series possible and have contributed to its success. To begin with, we owe a debt of gratitude to Transaction's Irving Louis Horowitz, who has been a constant source of encouragement from the beginning, and to Dominique Schnapper, Aron's daughter and literary executrix (and a distinguished scholar in her own right) who has given us her enthusiastic support along the way. Thanks also to Elisabeth Dutartre of the Centre de Recherches Politiques Raymond Aron for invaluable editorial assistance over the years and to Pierre Manent and Harvey Mansfield for bringing their wisdom to bear on Aron's work.

Daniel J. Mahoney
Brian C. Anderson
September 1999

INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSACTION EDITION

RAYMOND ARON'S great polemic, *The Opium of the Intellectuals,* was published in 1955 during the Cold War. It is a leading document in that war, which was fought with words as much as arms. The war with arms was between two superpowers and their allies, but the Cold War of words was fought mainly within the West, and the central battlefield was Paris. The question was whether the West would sustain its will and hence its efforts in arms, or would succumb to the doubt and self-criticism of its intellectuals, many of whom wanted, or behaved as if they wanted, the other side to win.

The most advanced of these intellectuals, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, were Aron's particular targets in this work. Americans owe Raymond Aron a great debt for a courageous deed in publishing it, a deed that was also a stroke of strategy against the enemy in his heartland. For however little courage there may seem to be in the act of writing a book, and however minor the consequences may seem to be of what intellectuals in Paris happen to believe, one should not underestimate the benefits gained when Aron took the field. The good sense of non-philosophers needs to be protected against bad philosophy even when it goes over their heads, for there are many, especially among the young, who will be impressed with such high-sounding doctrines as existentialism and phenomenology, especially when combined with the moral content and fueled by the passionate hatred characteristic of Marxism. Moreover, Aron did not dismiss these doctrines with a superiority of his own; he was as far from wishing to demean philosophy as he was from condescending to the good sense of the people. He carefully weighed the arguments of the intellectuals he opposed. While denouncing the myths of the Left, the revolution, and the proletariat, he furnishes evidence of error and exposes weaknesses of reasoning that amply reveal those ideas to be the myths that he calls them. Of course, he could not entirely discredit or face down those he proved to be enemies of liberty, since the latter were supported by the dominant trends of thought in the West, but he stood up to them. He let others see that they could be opposed, refuted, and then deservedly and successfully mocked.

Aron was criticized himself for his mostly "sociological," occasionally satirical characterizations of intellectuals in the book, as if he were an anti-

intellectual conservative unwilling to take their ideas seriously. But in fact he supplied his own definition of an intellectual not given to taking opium. The true intellectual, he says, does not content himself with signing manifestos, and when entering politics, he makes an engagement to a party and accepts the risks and the harshness of politics. But in his partisanship he endeavors never to forget "the arguments of the adversary, or the uncertainty of the future, or the faults of his own side, and the underlying fraternity of combatants." Aron's part in the Cold War was not a minor one. Coming from among the French intellectuals, taught in their schoolhouse, the École Normale in Paris, familiar with their headquarters at St.Germain-des-Prés, and having shared their preoccupation with German philosophy, he nonetheless made himself an exception to their rule. His passing mention of the "underlying fraternity of combatants" shows that the source of his reproach to his fellows was his sense of honor—a notion not to be found in the strange confusion of individualism and collectivism in their doctrines. Aron's strength of will derived from his strength of mind, but these two great qualities in him were bound together, mutually moderated, and directed to a common end, by the fact, and by his realization of the fact, that he was an honorable man.

Yet no one should think that *The Opium of the Intellectuals* is a book about the past. To begin with, one could say that the postwar French intellectuals are not peculiar to France; they are the archetype of modern intellectuals everywhere. Deriving from such great modern philosophers as Bacon and Descartes, intellectuals became an avowed international movement in the Enlightenment and expressed their political will in the French Revolution. The notion they represent arises from theory made practical through public enlightenment, in sum, the rational control of societies heretofore stagnating under the authority of superstition and tradition. No longer will reason remain in seclusion apart from society, given over to contemplation, occupied with pure theory, and venturing into politics only to look rather than act under the cover of Utopian schemes. From now on, reason will be put to work in society, criticizing the ways of custom and replacing them with new laws and institutions that are of necessity universal because they are rational.

Typically, then, modern intellectuals seek to establish the single way of life or regime that accords with reason. This can be a single constitutional regime like the one proposed by liberals such as Hegel, or the Marxist communist Utopia in which the state has been abolished. Whatever its particular formulation, this single regime will be lasting because it is impartial; being

rational, it has no inherent bias that might give rise to opposition or revolution within it. The intellectuals' regime may well be set in place by revolution, but that revolution brings an end to irrationality and oppression, thus foreclosing the need for further revolution.

Aron emphasizes that in this picture of the intellectuals' regime there is no need for wisdom to compromise with adverse circumstances. Wisdom, by leaving its closet and going outdoors in the attempt to dominate society, has compromised itself in advance, as wisdom; for wisdom now includes the trick of getting itself accepted and obeyed. The communist Utopia is not merely the rational way to live but also rationally predictable as the necessary and inevitable product of history. Here "rational" means in accord with trends and events as well as in accord with reason. From this follows the monumental impatience of intellectuals with human complexity and imperfection. They feel that they have fully discounted the evil in men by appealing to low motives of self-interest rather than depending on noble sacrifice; their optimism is reasonable because it is not based on faith in human goodness. As Aron says, it is "visionary optimism combined with a pessimistic view of reality." Modern intellectuals, therefore, have little understanding of the partiality, the partisanship, of politics. They see only the noble end and the low means; they do not see that the high and the low in human beings are connected, so that men, who are always partial to themselves, nonetheless always want to think well of themselves. The concepts of altruism and self-interest are both extreme, artificial constructs, unreal and inhuman. What gets in the way of the intellectuals' Utopia is more the unexpected goodness of men than their disappointing faults, a point of which Machiavelli was more cognizant than the systematic philosophers who came after him.

The conclusion of this description is that modern intellectuals do not appreciate the inevitability of partisanship; hence they do not understand politics. Their difficulty is not that they are not politically gifted, but rather that they neither know nor care to know what it means to be politically gifted. They believe that politics is a temporary necessity until the rational solution is put in place. But one does not understand politics unless one sees that it is a permanent feature of human life, and that it defines human imperfection as the striving for perfection of beings incapable of it. Every regime is imperfect but wants to be perfect; not, it is partial and biased but claims to be comprehensive and satisfying. The wish and the claim cannot be dismissed so as to clear the way for a theorist's prescription from outside, for they come from human pride, which is always in part blind, in part admirable.

Intellectuals are proud but oblivious of pride. They do not see why others resist their rule, or even that they themselves wish to rule. They are, as such, lacking in the self-knowledge that was once thought to be the end of wisdom. Aron notes that all rivals to the rule of intellectuals have disappeared—the Church, the nobility, and under communism, the bourgeoisie. In that condition intellectuals are kings, or at least bureaucrats. Joseph Stalin, the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with mastery over the life and death of millions of men, is also an intellectual. Other intellectuals can hardly refuse their concurrence without calling into question the idea of a single, rational regime: they must obey. When intellectuals rule, intellectuals obey.

Why should Stalin, a vulgar man and a murderer who never had a single interesting thought, be considered an intellectual? Aron remarks that Stalin's authority comes from a universal doctrine similar to religion, and he conveys the point in the title of his book, which likens the opium that intellectuals take for themselves to the opiate that priests offer to the people, according to Marxists. But the difference is that religion (or the Christian religion) bases its promises on the other world, and therefore always reserves to itself the right to criticize governments. Christianity is not an opiate but rather the contrary - a call to awareness. Under the "secular religion" of communism, however, the other world is transposed to earth, and not merely to the far-off future on earth. Since the communist future is predictable, it must be inherent in the present, in the party of the proletariat, and in the leader of that party, Stalin. Thus communism is driven to understand its heaven as present reality transfigured by words. Here Aron points to the fundamental weakness of totalitarianism, that it cannot sustain its revolutionary faith and fervor. If present reality is said to be satisfactory, then the time for indignation is past and sacrifices to the state cannot be justified. But if present reality is admitted to be unsatisfactory, then how-by what concrete signs-can it be shown to be on the way to the millennium? Some thirty-four years after Aron's book was published, the weakness he discerned took effect, and communism collapsed without a struggle. It fell because, though it was a regime, it had no way to understand itself as one. Its rule was judged by the standard of the termination of its rule, a termination advanced into the present by the necessary impatience of its idea. Communism could not stand, yet could not avoid, comparison with its present reality. Its routine was not inspired by its dream but destroyed by it. Its rulers had nothing to be proud

of. They were forced to become intellectuals and either lie unconvincingly about the present or give up on it.

Besides the importance of the regime, Aron has another lesson for intellectuals regarding nihilism, which appears most clearly in the defense of his book, "Fanaticism, Prudence, and Faith," published in the appendix of this edition. The French intellectuals were not Marxists or communists; as Aron said, they voted for the Communist Party, not for communism. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty believed, contrary to Marxism, that the human destiny is individual and, if one may say so, essentially accidental. As advanced intellectuals, they had moved far from the notion of the rational control of society with which modern intellectuals began. They traveled in theory the same route that the Soviet rulers and intellectuals followed in fact, from exaggerated faith in reason to extreme loss of faith in it. They began from the rejection of Hegel's rational state as too rational by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the very contrary of the Marxist critique that it was not rational enough. But somehow Sartre and Merleau-Ponty found it impossible to leave reason behind, and so they combined it with unreason. To their existentialism and phenomenology they joined neo-Marxism, with the accent on the neo. In this they anticipated the New Left of the late Sixties with its tortuous fusion of Marx and Nietzsche and the postmodernism of the present age with its unserious, happy-golucky leftism. All are varieties of what Aron calls "historicist doctrinairism." When intellectuals no longer believe in the possibility of the mastery of reason, they resort to the idea of groundless mastery by unreasoning individuals choosing or opting on their own only for themselves. But when they see that that idea lands them in a predicament where they are negative, irresponsible, and unable to act, they go back to the doctrinairism they had fled. In every swing of this oscillation the consistent mood is hatred of prudence and moderation, which are held to be both too rational and too irrational.

In this book Raymond Aron revealed the nature of the thinker in his century and, probably, in the next one, too. But he also left a powerful antidote in his arguments and his example.

Harvey C. Mansfield
Cambridge, Massachusetts
August 1999

FOREWORD

AT THE beginning of January, 1955, I wrote, to introduce this book to the French public, a preface which opened with the following words: "I had had occasion, over the past few years, to write a number of articles directed not so much against the Communists as against the *communisants,* those who do not belong to the party but whose sympathies are with the Soviet world. I decided to collect these articles and undertook to write an introduction. The collection appeared under the title *Polémiques;* the introduction developed into this book.

"Seeking to explain the attitude of the intellectuals, merciless toward the failings of the democracies but ready to tolerate the worst crimes as long as they are committed in the name of the proper doctrines, I soon came across the sacred words, Left, Revolution, Proletariat. The analysis of these myths led me to reflect on the cult of history, and then to examine a social category to which the sociologists have not yet devoted the attention it deserves: the intelligentsia.

"Thus this book deals both with the present state of so-called left-wing ideologies and with the situation of the intelligentsia in France and in the world at large. It attempts to give an answer to some of the questions which others besides myself must have asked themselves. Why has Marxism come back into fashion in a country whose economic evolution has belied the Marxist predictions? Why are the ideologies of the proletariat and the Communist Party all the more successful where the working class is least numerous? What circumstances control the ways of speech, thought and action of the intellectuals in different countries?"

Two years later, I wrote another preface to present this book to the English and American public: "'Controversies between intellectuals about the destiny of intellectuals play as big a part in French life as love and food,' to quote Sir Alan Herbert, the most serious of British parliamentarians. This book, born of discussions with friends, ex-friends, and opponents, continues a French tradition. It expresses the passions, the conflicts, by which the national conscience was rent in the ten years that followed the liberation and the Second World War.

"It will not be without value to place this contribution to the 'great French debate,' both in space and in time, in relation to the great debates of other

countries and to the events which have intervened in the past two years.

"The fashionable philosophies in France are Marxism and Existentialism. The intellectuals of the Left who give their reserved and uneasy support to the Moscow cause without being members of the Communist Party use concepts taken from Hegel, Husserl, or Kierkegaard to justify their semi-acceptance of it. To answer them effectively I have used the language that they use themselves. They would have rejected in advance the arguments of logical positivism, but they cannot dismiss criticisms derived from doctrines which they themselves invoke.

"At the same time I have perhaps over-emphasised the traditional character of the debate, and I am afraid that British or American readers may be tempted to subscribe to Mr. John Bowie's opinion, or sally, when he said: 'It is one of the most depressing aspects of the brilliant French culture that opinions so fundamentally silly should command so much prestige.'

"Such a reaction would be intelligible, but hasty. After all, in the Soviet orbit hundreds of millions of people receive a Marxist-Leninist education. In the free world, outside the English-speaking countries, thousands or tens of thousands of intellectuals partially accept dialectical materialism and the dogmas of the Communist Parties. True, there are good reasons for believing that the final result of this education is rather skepticism than faith. I agree that the loyalty alternately granted to and withheld from these doctrines by the writers and men of learning of free Europe is due more to the unhappy state of the western conscience than to reasoning about the concepts of class or dialectics. Nevertheless the fact remains that the putting of feelings into rational or pseudorational form is of great importance to men of thought, and that it is neither wise nor convincing to answer ideologies with a contemptuous: 'It's just silly.'

"After, all, the way of thinking symbolised by logical positivism is just as provincial, perhaps more provincial, than that of St. Germain des Prés and the French intelligentsia of the Left.

"Whether one likes or dislikes it, welcomes or deplores it, the fact remains that the 'clerks' of Paris still play a role in the world and radiate an influence out of proportion to the place that France occupies on the map. The resonance of the voice of France in spite of her weakened position is to be explained by cultural and historical peculiarities.

"Britain created parliamentary institutions which were imitated in vain elsewhere; the French translated these institutions into ideas which were

brilliant, eternal—and equivocal. The British peacefully created the Welfare State; the French also produced a system of social legislation, comparable in many respects with that on the other side of the Channel. But, over and above that, the French invoke 'the classless society,' 'the recognition of man by man,' and 'the authentic intersubjectivity.' These terms are neither so eloquent nor so clear as liberty, equality, and fraternity, but nonetheless they illustrate one of the historic functions of the French intelligence: that of associating itself with humanity's dreams and emotions and transforming for better and for worse the prosaic achievements of society into Promethean tasks, glorious defeats, tragic epics.

"The French intelligentsia is torn between the aspiration to universality and the special circumstances of the national situation; between attachment to democratic ideas and a taste for aristocratic values; between love of liberty and revolt against the power and the technical civilisation of the United States; between moral inspiration and the acceptance of cynicism, the alleged condition of effectiveness. Because of these conflicts the French intelligentsia represents more than itself. College graduates from under-developed countries, Japanese writers, Western intellectuals, are also in varying degrees aware of these divergent pulls, but the French feel them more acutely, and elaborate them in more subtle terms. Indeed, how many readers who loftily dismiss these speculations will thereby simply be making the mistake of not recognising themselves in an enlarging mirror? *De te res agitur.*

"Whatever may be the importance of Marxism in its ideological form, what we are dealing with in this book is less historical materialism than historical optimism and rationalism. There may be countries in which there is no awareness of the myth of the revolution and salvation by violence, or of the myth of the proletariat as the chosen class; but nowhere in our time is there lack of awareness of the myth of the Left and of the cult of history. In India I had the experience of lecturing on the fallacies of the opposition between Right and Left; my audience, which consisted entirely of intellectuals, was as upset and indignant as my French, British, or American critics. Not that I deny the extent of the opposition between those who sit on one side or the other of an assembly; I deny only that because of their ideas and opinions they can be divided into two camps, one the incarnation of good and the other of evil, one belonging to the future and the other to the past, one standing for reason and the other for superstition. Anyone who maintains the equal validity of both camps and the heterogeneous nature of both is immediately denounced. Both American liberals and the Left in France and

Britain share the same illusion: the illusion of the orientation of history in a constant direction, of evolution toward a state of affairs in harmony with an ideal. Marxism is only one version, a simultaneously cataclysmic and determinist version, of an optimism to which rationalists are professionally inclined; it is favoured by the contrast between the promises of industrial civilisation and the catastrophes of our time.

"The idolisation of history of which Marxism represents the extreme form teaches violence and fanaticism. History, correctly interpreted, teaches tolerance and wisdom. I am not convinced that there is no need for these lessons outside France."

The book appeared in France on the eve of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party, therefore before the denunciation of Stalin by the present Secretary General, before the revolts in Poland and in Hungary. Today Stalin no longer lies in the Mausoleum in Red Square. Living, he was deified. Dead, he has been dispossessed of his ill-gotten prestige and driven out of the Paradise where the heroes of the Revolution live. Is there still need to denounce the opium of the intellectuals?

It is not the author's place to answer that question. The author can only indicate the meaning which he gives today to analyses and polemics, some of which were inspired by the circumstances of yesterday.

Since 1953 what has been the major change in the ideological situation, in France and throughout the world? A Communist would reply: the denunciation of the cult of personality. A non-Communist would express the same thing in different words: for example, he would say that Khrushchev himself has authenticated the accusations of the West against Stalin's regime. One who spoke in 1952 as Khrushchev speaks in 1961 was called a perverted viper. It has now been established, as an historical fact, that Stalin executed thousands, hundreds of thousands of Communists, innocent of crimes as the unhappy victims were, by means of terror and forced confessions. Further, Khrushchev himself, to justify his passivity or his silence at the time of the cult of personality, has invoked a motive that Montesquieu would certainly not have disavowed: fear. As if to illustrate the theory of despotism developed in *L'Esprit des Lois,* the closest companions of the dead tyrant have stated that they were paralyzed by fear, each one isolated from the others by suspicion, all of them incapable of breaking through the web of lies in which they were imprisoned.

With Stalinism, a certain form of secular religion has disappeared. This disappearance does not surprise me; I foresaw it in 1954, for which I claim no great credit. The transfer of the sacred mission from class to party, from party to Central Committee, from Central Committee to Secretary General ended in the transfiguration of a man. That this man was, by accident, almost mad in the clinical sense, put a touch of macabre irony on this shift from a vision of history commanded by impersonal forces to the exaltation of a hero, the incarnation of the proletariat as saviour. But had the Secretary General been an ordinary man or even a man of good will, nothing would have been changed in the long run. The Leninist version of Marxism requires that the party assume the mission originally given to the proletariat. Once the party is invested with this mission, the vacillation between personalization and depersonalization becomes inevitable: either the Supreme Leader succeeds, by persuasion or terror, in substituting himself for the collective Messiah and in receiving the homage destined for the latter; or else, on the contrary, the new chief, denouncing his predecessor, dissimulates his own power and tries to fade into the background of the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the whole party. The second of these alternatives corresponds to the present phase.

If my quarrel were with the Stalinists, and with them alone, the case would be clear: against what he calls the cult of the personality Mr. Khrushchev is a more persuasive prosecutor than I. But, in reality, the state of mind which I seek to understand is not that of the pure Stalinists or the true believers, of those who, once for all, having given their faith and their life to a cause, wish to ignore what their chiefs decide to hide from them, contenting themselves after the event with the explanations offered them. The faith of the dedicated revolutionary is for all time: it does not call for explanations.

It is entirely another question with the half-commitment, only hinted at but allegedly reasoned, of the progressive, who was not entirely ignorant of the horrors of Stalinism, who is no longer unwilling to recognize them, but who remains nevertheless irreducibly hostile to the West, in sympathy, in spite of all, with the Communist undertaking. J. P. Sartre has condemned the intervention in Hungary, but he continues to see no other road to salvation but that of Socialism: this monster all spattered with blood is none the less Socialism.

Such is the question which I put to myself earlier, and which continues to present itself today in spite of the ideological vicissitudes and the peripatetics of world politics: why this everlasting injustice? Why this preference, in a

way a priori, for one side? Why this fear, in France, of not being on the left, in the United States, of not being a liberal? These questions are to my mind the same, shaped by the French context, but of deep significance for all countries, once one refuses to be misled by the vocabulary used.

But, one may ask, didn't Stalin carry off with him in death not only Stalinism, but also the age of ideology? That which characterizes the present period is no longer an excess of faith, but of skepticism. In a sense, the systems of ideas and beliefs which separated the camps and spiritual families are in the process of disintegration. The affluent society banks the fires of indignation. Imperfect and unjust as Western society is in many respects, it has progressed sufficiently in the course of the last half-century so that reforms appear more promising than violence and unpredictable disorder. The condition of the masses is improving. The standard of living depends on productivity—therefore, the rational organization of labor, of technical skills, and of investments. Finally, the economic system of the West no longer corresponds to any one of the pure doctrines; it is neither liberal nor planned, it is neither individualist nor collectivist. How could the ideologies resist these changes, if one understands by ideology the synthesis of an interpretation of history and of a program of action toward a future predicted or hoped for?

I have evoked, in effect, the end of the age of ideology, a theme taken up by E. Shilz, Daniel Bell, S. M. Lipset and other American sociologists. But if I detest ideological fanaticism, I like little better the indifference which sometimes succeeds it. Those who have dreamed of a radical revolution find it hard to accustom themselves to the loss of their hope. They refuse to distinguish among regimes from the moment none of them is transfigured by the hope of a radiant future. Therefore, skepticism is perhaps for the addict an indispensable phase of withdrawal; it is not, however, the cure. The addict is cured only on the day when he is capable of faith without illusion.

"The man who no longer expects miraculous changes either from a revolution or an economic plan is not obliged to resign himself to the unjustifiable."

Let the reader make no mistake. Ten years ago, I thought it necessary to fight ideological fanaticism. Tomorrow it will perhaps be indifference which seems to me to be feared. The fanatic, animated by hate, seems to me terrifying. A self-satisfied mankind fills me with horror.

PART ONE

POLITICAL MYTHS

CHAPTER I

THE MYTH OF THE LEFT

DOES the antithesis of Right and Left still have any meaning? The man who asks this question is immediately suspect. "When I am asked", Alain once wrote, "if the cleavage between right-wing and left-wing parties, between men of the Right and men of the Left, still has a meaning, the first idea that comes to me is that the questioner is certainly not a man of the Left." This verdict need not inhibit us, for it betrays an attachment to a prejudice rather than a conviction founded on reason.

The Left, according to Littré, is "the opposition party in French parliaments, the party which sits on the left of the President". But the word Left has quite a different connotation from the word opposition. Parties alternate in power; the left-wing party stays left-wing, even if it forms the government.

In stressing the significance of the two terms, Right and Left, people do not restrict themselves to the mere statement that the machinery of political forces tends to divide itself into two blocs separated by a centre which is continually being encroached upon. Rather do they infer the existence of two types of men whose attitudes are fundamentally opposed, or two sets of conceptions between which the interminable and unchanging dialogue continues through every vicissitude of institution or terminology, or else two camps engaged in a never-ending struggle. Do these two kinds of men, of ideas, of parties, exist elsewhere than in the imagination of historians deluded by the example of the Dreyfus affair and by a questionable interpretation of electoral sociology?

The different groups which consider themselves left-wing have never in any profound sense been united. From one generation to the next the slogans and programmes change. Has the Left of yesterday, which fought for constitutional government, anything in common with the Left which today asserts its authority in the 'People's Democracies'?

The Retrospective Myth

France is generally considered to be the ancestral home of the antagonism between Right and Left. Whereas these terms scarcely figured at all in the political language of England before, the 'thirties, in France they were naturalised long ago. The Left has such prestige in France that even the conservative and middle-of-the-road parties are at pains to disguise themselves with pseudonyms borrowed from the vocabulary of their enemies. French parties vie with one another in 'republican', 'democratic' and 'socialist' convictions.

Two circumstances, according to the current view, make this antagonism between Right and Left exceptionally grave in France. The first is the religious question. The conception of the world to which the rulers of the *Ancien Régime* adhered was inspired by the teachings of the Catholic Church. The new outlook which paved the way for the Revolution focused its attack on the principle of absolute authority, including in its condemnation the Church as well as the Monarchy. The party of progress, at the end of the eighteenth century and during the best part of the nineteenth, fought against both throne and altar, inclining to anticlericalism because the ecclesiastical hierachy favoured, or seemed to favour, the party of reaction. In England, where religious freedom was both the occasion and the apparent reward of the Revolution of 1688, the progressive parties bore the stamp of Nonconformist religious fervour rather than of atheistic rationalism.

The transition from the *Ancien Régime* to modern society was accomplished with unprecedented brutality and suddenness in France. On the other side of the Channel, constitutional government was introduced by stages, representative institutions being developed from the English Parliament whose origins could be traced back to mediaeval custom. In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries democratic legitimacy took the place of monarchical legitimacy without completely eliminating the latter, and the equality of the citizen before the law eventually blunted the distinctions between the Estates: the ideas which the French Revolution flung tempestuously across Europe—the sovereignty of the people, constitutional government, elected and sovereign assemblies, equality of rights—were realised in England, sometimes even sooner than in France, without any need for the people to rise, with a Promethean gesture, and shake off their chains. The process of 'democratisation' in England was the joint achievement of rival parties.

Whether one regards it as grandiose or horrific, as a catastrophe or an epic, the Revolution cuts French history in two. It seems to raise up two Frances, one against the other, the first of which refuses to resign itself to oblivion while the other carries on a relentless crusade against the past. Each of them regards itself as the embodiment of a perennial human type. The one invokes family, authority, religion, the other equality, reason, liberty; on the one side we have respect for order slowly evolving through the centuries; on the other a passionate belief in man's capacity to reconstruct society according to the data of science: the Right, the party of tradition and of privilege, versus the Left, the party of progress and intellect.

This classic interpretation is not a false one, but it represents exactly half the truth. At every level, the two types of men exist (though not all Frenchmen can be fitted into either category): M. Homais versus M. le Curé, Alain and Jaurès versus Taine and Maurras, Clemenceau versus Foch. In certain circumstances, when the conflict assumes a mainly ideological character—over the education laws, for example, or the Dreyfus affair, or the separation of Church and State—the disparate elements tend to form themselves into two blocs each basing itself on a single orthodoxy. But it has rarely been pointed out that this apparent homogeneity is essentially retrospective and that it does no more than camouflage the inexpiable quarrels and divisions within the alleged blocs. The history of France since 1789 is characterised by the consistent inability of right-wing or left-wing coalitions to stick together and govern. The myth of a single unified Left is an imaginary compensation for the successive revolutionary failures from 1789 to 1848.

Until the consolidation of the Third Republic—apart from the few months between the February Revolution and the street fighting of June 1848—the Left in France in the nineteenth century was in permanent opposition (whence the confusion between Left and Opposition). The Left opposed the Restoration, because it considered itself the heir of the Revolution, which was the source and justification of all its historic claims, its dreams of past glory and its hopes for the future. But this nostalgic, backward-moving Left was actually as complex and equivocal as the tremendous events from which it claimed descent. Its unity was purely mythical. It had never been united between 1789 and 1815 and it was no more so in 1848 when the Republic seized the opportunity of filling the constitutional void left by the collapse of the Orleanist monarchy. The Right, of course, was no more united than the Left. In 1815 the monarchist party was divided between the Ultras, who

dreamed of a return to the *Ancien Régime,* and the Moderates, who were prepared to accept things as they were. The arrival of Louis-Philippe flung the Legitimists into discontented isolation, and even the triumph of Louis-Napoleon failed to bring about a reconciliation between Orleanists and Legitimists in spite of their common hostility to the usurper.

The civil discords of the nineteenth century followed the same pattern as the dramatic events of the revolutionary period. The failure of the constitutional monarchy led to a semi-parliamentary monarchy, the failure of this led to a republic which eventually gave way to a plebiscitary empire. In the same way, Constituants, Feuillants, Girondins and Jacobins had fought each other relentlessly only to give way in the end to a crowned military dictator. These various left-wing groups were not only rivals for the possession of power, they were agreed neither on the form to be given to the government of France, nor on the means to be employed to this end, nor on the extent of the reforms to be introduced. The Monarchists, who wanted to give France a constitution similar to that of England, were in agreement with the egalitarian republicans only in the degree of their hostility to the *Ancien Régime.*

It is not my intention here to examine the reasons why the Revolution took such a fatal course. Guglielmo Ferrero, in his later years, was fond of pointing out the distinction between the two revolutions—the constructive revolution which aimed at extending the franchise and establishing certain liberties, and the destructive revolution brought about by the collapse of one principle of legitimacy and the absence of a new legitimacy to replace it. The distinction is satisfying to the mind. The constructive revolution corresponds more or less with the changes which we can regard with favour: representative government, social equality, personal and intellectual liberties; while the destructive revolution can be blamed for all the evil consequences: terror, wars, dictatorship and tyranny. One might well imagine the monarchy itself gradually introducing the essentials of what appears to us, looking back, to have been the Revolution's achievement. But the ideas which inspired the Revolution, without being strictly incompatible with monarchy, shook to its foundations the system of thought on which the French monarchy was based, thus instigating the crisis of legitimacy which brought about the Terror. The fact is, at all events, that the *Ancien Régime* collapsed at one blow, almost without resistance, and that it took France nearly a century to find another régime acceptable to the majority of the nation.

The social consequences of the Revolution seem obvious and irrevocable from the beginning of the nineteenth century. There could be no question of restoring old privileges, or of going back on the new civil code and the equality of the individual before the law. But the choice between republic and monarchy was still in abeyance. Democratic aspirations were by no means exclusively tied to parliamentary institutions; the Bonapartists suppressed political liberties in the name of democratic ideas. No serious French writer of the time recognised a single Left with a united will, representing all the heirs of the Revolution in opposition to the defenders of the *Ancien Régime.* The party of progress is an oppositionist myth, which did not even correspond to any electoral reality.

When the Republic was assured of survival, Clemenceau, against all the historical evidence, decreed that "the Revolution is a bloc". This proposition marked the end of the former quarrels between the various groups of the Left. Democracy was reconciled with parliamentarianism, the principle was finally established that all authority derives from the people, and, this time, universal suffrage encouraged the safeguarding of liberties and not the accession of a tyrant. Liberals and egalitarians, moderates and extremists, no longer had any motive for exterminating one another; the aims which the various parties had assigned themselves were all, at last, simultaneously achieved. The Third Republic, a régime at once constitutional and popular, which guaranteed the legal equality of its citizens by universal suffrage, gave itself a glorious and fictitious ancestor, the 'bloc' of the Revolution.

But at the very moment when the consolidation of the Third Republic was putting an end to the internal quarrels of the bourgeois Left, a new schism, which had been latent ever since the Babœuf conspiracy and perhaps since the beginnings of democratic thought, suddenly came to light. The anti-capitalist Left took over from the anti-monarchist Left. Can it be said that this new Left, which demanded public ownership of the means of production and State control of economic activity, was inspired by the same philosophy, or was even aiming at the same objectives, as the old Left which had risen up against absolutism, the privileged orders and the corporate guilds?

Marxism provided the formula which both ensured the continuity and marked the break between the old Left and the new. The Fourth Estate succeeded the Third, the proletariat took over from the bourgeoisie. The latter had thrown off the chains of feudalism, freed the people from the bonds of enforced allegiances, communal, personal or religious. The individual, freed from his former shackles and deprived at the same time of his

traditional security, found himself the defenceless victim of the blind mechanism of the market and the whims of the all-powerful capitalists. It was for the new Left, the proletariat, to complete the process of liberation, to restore a human order in the place of *laissez-faire* economy.

The emphasis on the liberal or on the authoritarian aspects of socialism varied according to different countries, different schools and different circumstances. Some insisted on a total break with the bourgeoisie, others stressed the need for continuity with the Great Revolution. The Social Democrats in pre-1914 Germany displayed a marked indifference towards the strictly political values of democracy and did not disguise their somewhat contemptuous disapproval of the attitude adopted by the French Socialists, who were firm defenders of universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy.

The conflict between bourgeois democracy and socialism in France presents the. same antithesis as the former conflicts between the various groups of the bourgeois Left: the more violent it is in reality, the more vehemently it is denied. Up to a fairly recent date, probably up to the Second World War. left-wing intellectuals rarely interpreted Marxism literally to the extent of admitting a radical division between the proletariat on the one hand and all past holders of power, bourgeois democrats included, on the other. The philosophy to which they were naturally inclined to subscribe was that of Jaurès, which combined Marxist elements with an idealistic metaphysic and a preference for reform. The Communist Party made more headway in its Popular Front or Resistance phases than when the class war was in the ascendant. Many Communist voters still persist in regarding the Party as the heir of the Enlightenment—the party which is pursuing the same task as the other left-wing groups, only with more success.

The social history of no other European country is scarred by such tragic episodes as those of June 1848 or the Commune. In 1924 and 1936 Socialists and Radicals triumphed together at the elections, but were incapable of governing together. From the day when the Socialists first joined a governmental coalition, the Communists became the principal working-class party. The periods of left-wing unity such as the alliance of anti-clericals and Socialists at the time of the Dreyfus affair and the fight for the separation of Church and State—crises which decisively influenced the thought of Alain—are less typical than the split between the bourgeoisie and the working class revealed by the outbreaks of 1848, 1871, 1936 and 1945. The 'unity of the Left' is less a reflection than a distortion of the reality of French politics.

Because it was incapable of attaining its objectives without twenty-five years of chaos and bloodshed, the party of progress conceived, after the event, a new and over-simplified dichotomy—between good and evil, the future and the past. Because it failed to integrate the working class with the rest of the nation, the bourgeois intelligentsia dreamed of a Left which would include the representatives both of the Third and of the Fourth Estates. This Left was not entirely mythical. Sometimes it presented a united front to the electorate. But just as the revolutionaries of 1789 became united only retrospectively, when the Restoration had thrown Girondins, Jacobins and Bonapartists together into opposition, so the Radicals and the Socialists were genuinely agreed only in their hatred of a vague, impersonal enemy —'reaction'—and in out-of-date battles against clericalism.

Dissociation of Values

Today, especially since the crisis of the 'thirties, the predominant idea of the Left, the idea which African and Asian students take back home with them from the universities of Europe and the United States, is a kind of watered-down Marxism. Its ideology combines, in a muddled synthesis, public ownership of the means of production, hostility towards the concentrations of economic power known as 'trusts', and a profound suspicion of the mechanism of the market. The watchword 'Keep Left' means progress, via nationalisation and controls, towards eventual equality of incomes.

In Great Britain this slogan has acquired a certain popularity over the past twenty years or so. Perhaps Marxism, which crystallised some of the aims of anti-capitalism, helped to foster the historic vision of a Left which would embody the cause of the future and eventually take over from capitalism. Perhaps Labour's victory in 1945 was an expression of the cumulative resentment of a fraction of the underprivileged against the ruling class. The coincidence between the wish for social reform and revolt against a ruling minority creates the situation where the myth of the Left is born and prospers.

On the Continent, the decisive ideological event of the century has been the double schism, splitting the Right as well as the Left, produced by Fascism or National Socialism on the one hand and Communism on the other. In the rest of the world, the decisive event has been the dissociation between the political and the social values of the Left. The appearance of ideological chaos arises from the clash and the confusion between a strictly

European schism and the dissociation of European values in societies outside the Western sphere of civilisation.

It is always dangerous to apply terms borrowed from the political vocabulary of the West to the internal conflicts of nations belonging to other spheres of civilisation, even and perhaps especially when the political parties concerned arc at pains to identify themselves with Western ideologies. Removed from their original settings ideologies are liable to develop in a manner diametrically opposed to their original aims and meanings. The same parliamentary institutions can exercise either a progressive or a conservative function according to the social class which introduces and directs them.

When a group of well-meaning officers with a lower middle-class background dissolves a parliament manipulated by Pashas and speeds up the development of national resources, where is the Left and where the Right? Officers who suspend constitutional liberties (in other words, the dictatorship of the sword) cannot in any circumstances be described as left-wing. But the plutocrats who made use of democratic institutions to maintain their privileges are no more worthy of that noble epithet.

In the countries of South America and Eastern Europe, the same combination of authoritarian means and socially progressive ends has often shown itself. In imitation of Europe, parliaments have been created and the vote has been introduced, but the masses have remained illiterate and the middle classes weak: the new liberal institutions have inevitably been monopolised by the 'feudalists' or the 'plutocrats'—the big landowners and their allies in the State machine. Should the dictatorship of Peron, supported by the *descamisados* and despised by the upper classes, attached both to their privileges and to the parliament they created and controlled, have been regarded as right-wing or left-wing? The political values and the social and economic values of the Left, which are on the way to being finally reconciled in Europe, are still radically dissociated elsewhere.

Moreover, this dissociation is far from having been ignored by political theorists. The Greek philosophers have described the two typical situations in which authoritarian movements are liable to arise, neither of which can be attributed either to the aristocratic Right or the liberal Left: the 'old tyranny', more often military, arises from the transition between patriarchal societies and urban and craft societies, the 'modern tyranny', usually civilian, from the struggle of factions inside a democracy. The 'old tyranny' is dependent on a fraction at least of the up-and-coming classes, the merchants and

shopkeepers, and brushes aside the institutions controlled to their own advantage by the old aristocratic families. The 'modern tyranny', in the cities of antiquity, brought together, in a somewhat unstable coalition, the rich 'alarmed by the threat of spoliatory laws' and the poorest of the citizens whom the new middle-class régime left unprovided, a prey to the usurers. In the industrial societies of the twentieth century a similar coalition can bring together the big capitalists, terrified by socialist encroachments, the intermediary groups who feel themselves to be the victims both of the plutocrats and of the working classes protected by trade unions, the poorest elements among the workers themselves (agricultural workers or unemployed) and also the nationalists and activists of all social classes who are exasperated by the slowness of parliamentary action.

During the last century the history of France offered examples of similar dissociations. Napoleon codified the social reforms of the Revolution, but at the same time he replaced a weak and fairly tolerant monarchy with a personal dictatorship, as effective as it was despotic. Social reform and authoritarian government were no more incompatible in the bourgeois era than are Five Year Plans and tyranny in the socialist century.

It was necessary for the Left, in order to retain the ideological purity of the old struggles, to interpret the 'Fascist revolutions' as extreme forms of reaction. Against all the evidence, it was generally denied that the brown- or black-shirt ed demagogues were the mortal enemies not only of social democracy but also of the liberal bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. The right-wing revolutions, it was obstinately maintained, kept the capitalists in power and restricted themselves to substituting the despotism of the Police State for the more subtle methods of parliamentary democracy. Whatever the role played by big business in the advent of the various Fascist movements, it is surely a falsification of the historical significance of the 'national revolutions' to dismiss them as up-to-date but not particularly original forms of reaction or as the State superstructure of monopoly capitalism.

Certainly, if we take Bolshevism at one extreme and Spanish Fascism at the other, there can be no hesitation about calling the first left-wing and the second right-wing. Bolshevism took the place of a traditional absolutism, liquidated the old ruling class and everywhere introduced collective ownership of the means of production; it was brought to power by workers, peasants and soldiers, hungry for bread and for peace and for the possession of the soil. Fascism in Spain replaced a parliamentary régime, was financed

and wholeheartedly supported by the privileged classes (the big landowners, the industrialists, the Church, the Army) and won its victory on the battlefields of the Civil War with the help of colonial troops, Carlists and German and Italian intervention. Bolshevism invoked all the ideology of the Left: rationalism, progress, liberty. Franco invoked the counter-revolutionary ideology: family, religion, authority.

The antithesis is far from being as clearly defined as this in every case. National Socialism in Germany mobilised millions who were no less miserable than those who followed the call of the Socialist and Communist parties. Hitler, it is true, was financed by the bankers and industrialists, and many of the generals saw in him the only man capable of restoring Germany to her former greatness, but millions of Germans believed in the Führer because they no longer believed in elections or parties or in parliament. In a mature capitalist State, the violence of the economic blizzard combined with the moral consequences of military defeat to create a situation more or less analogous to that of primitive industrialisation: the contrast between the apparent impotence of parliament and economic stagnation; the ripeness for revolt of debt-ridden peasants and unemployed workers; the existence of millions of out-of-work intellectuals who hated liberals and plutocrats and social democrats, all in their eyes profiteers of the status quo.

The appeal of totalitarian parties asserts itself, or tends to, whenever a crisis comes to reveal a disparity between the capabilities of constitutional régimes and the problems they have to face in governing industrial mass societies. The temptation to sacrifice political liberties for the sake of vigorous action by no means disappeared with Hitler and Mussolini.

National Socialism became less and less conservative as its reign advanced. Army chiefs, the descendants of the great families, were strung up side by side with Social Democratic leaders. Step by step, the economy was taken over by the State and the Party strove to remodel Germany—and, if it could, the whole of Europe—in conformity with its own ideology. In its identification of the Party with the State, in its *Gleichschaltung* of independent bodies, in its transformation of a minority doctrine into a national orthodoxy, in the violence of its methods and the unlimited power of the police, the Hitlerite régime surely has more in common with Bolshevik Russia than with the daydreams of the counter-revolutionaries. Right and Left, or Fascist pseudo-Right and Communist pseudo-Left, can be said to meet one another in totalitarianism.

It could, of course, be argued that Hitlerite totalitarianism is right-wing and Stalinist totalitarianism left-wing, on the grounds that the former derived its ideas from counterrevolutionary romanticism and the latter from revolutionary rationalism, that the one is essentially particularist—national or racial—and the other universal. And yet, thirty-five years after the Revolution, the allegedly left-wing totalitarianism extols Greater Russian nationalism, denounces cosmopolitanism, and retains in all its severity the absolutism of the Police State—in other words, it continues to deny the liberal and personal values which the movement of the Enlightenment sought to uphold against arbitrary power and religious obscurantism.

More valid, at first glance, is the argument according to which State orthodoxy and terror can be excused as the inevitable accompaniment of the throes of the Revolution and the necessities of industrialisation. The Bolsheviks, according to this argument, are Jacobins who have succeeded and, taking advantage of circumstance, have extended and developed the area under their control. Since Russia and the other countries won over to the new faith were economically backward by comparison with the West, the Party, convinced that it embodies the cause of progress, has been forced, in order to establish itself, to impose privations on the people and whip them up to greater efforts. Did not Edmund Burke himself believe that the very existence of the Jacobin state constituted a deadly threat to the traditional régimes, that war between the latter and the revolutionary idea was inevitable? Sooner or later, the exhaustion of Communist ardour and the raising of the standard of living will heal the great schism; in the long run, it will be found that the methods differed more than the ends.

Looking back, it has been recognised that the Left, when it rose against the *Ancien Régime,* was aiming at a multiplicity of objectives which were neither contradictory nor interdependent. Thanks to the Revolution, France achieved social equality, on paper, before the rest of Europe; but the collapse of the Monarchy and the elimination of the privileged orders from every political role inaugurated a prolonged period of instability in French government which lasted nearly a century. Between 1789 and 1880, neither personal liberties nor constitutional government were as continuously respected in France as they were in England. The French liberals—those who were more concerned with *habeas corpus,* trial by jury, the liberty of the press, and representative institutions than with the form of the constitution, whether monarchist or republican—were never more than an impotent minority. Although universal suffrage was not introduced into England until the end of

the century, that country never experienced plebiscitary dictatorships, its citizens never had to fear arbitrary arrest nor its newspapers censorship and suppression.

A similar phenomenon, it might be said, is now being unfolded before our eves: a conflict of method has been falsely interpreted as a conflict of principle. The development of modern industrial society and the integration of the masses are universal facts. State control if not State ownership of the means of production, trade union participation in public life, the protection of the workers: these things constitute the minimum programme of contemporary socialism. In countries where economic development has reached a fairly high level, where democratic ideas and practice are deep-rooted, the methods of the democratic Labour movement allow the integration of the masses to be accomplished without any sacrifice of liberty. On the other hand, in countries like Russia where economic development was backward and where the State, cast in the rigid mould of absolutism, was ill adapted to modern demands, the revolutionary party, as soon as it came to power, was obliged to accelerate industrialisation and to coerce the people into accepting inevitable sacrifices and discipline. The Soviet régime bears the imprint both of the mentality of the Jacobins and the impatience of the planners; it will draw nearer to democratic socialism in proportion as ideological scepticism and bourgeois values develop inside it.

Even if one subscribed to this relatively optimistic view, the reconciliation of the communist with the socialist Left would clearly have to be deferred to a far-distant future. When, one may ask, will the Communists cease to believe in the universality of their vocation? When will the expansion of productive forces permit the relaxation of police terror and ideological absolutism? So many hundreds of millions of human beings are afflicted by poverty that a doctrine which promises plenty will need to retain a monopoly of propaganda for centuries more in order to cover the interval between myth and reality. And the reconciliation between political liberty and planned economy will be more difficult than the reconciliation, which took a century to achieve, between the social conquests and the political objectives of the French Revolution. The parliamentary State was in keeping, both in theory and in practice, with the demands of bourgeois society. Can a planned economy be made consistent with anything other than an authoritarian State? In other words, does not the progress of the Left bring with it, dialectically, a worse oppression than the one it rose to conquer?

The Dialectic of Régimes

The Left was born and took shape in opposition—the child of an idea. It denounced a social order which, like all things human, was indeed imperfect. But as soon as the Left was victorious and became in its turn responsible for the existing society, the Right, which was now identified with the opposition or counter-revolution, had little difficulty in demonstrating that the Left represented, not liberty against authority or the people against the privileged few, but one power against another, one privileged class against another. To get some idea of the reverse side of the revolutionary medal, one has only to listen to the polemics of the spokesmen for the former régime, a régime transfigured by memory or rehabilitated by the spectacle of new inequalities —the polemics in fact indulged in by the conservatives of the early nineteenth century, or the liberal capitalists of today.

Social relations elaborated over the centuries usually end up by humanising themselves. Inequalities of status between members of the various 'estates' do not exclude a kind of mutual respect and genuine human intercourse. Looking back to 'the good old days', people sing the praises of personal relations and extol the virtues of fidelity and loyalty as opposed to the coldness and lack of sympathy between individuals who are theoretically equal. The Vendéens, for example, fought to retain their way of life, not their chains. The more distant the event the more smugly exaggerated becomes the contrast drawn between the happiness of the subjects of yesterday and the sufferings of the citizens of today.

The counter-revolutionary polemic compares the post-revolutionary State to the monarchic State, the individual, abandoned to the arbitrary whims of the new rich and the new bureaucracy, to the peasants and artisans who were united under the old régime into closely-knit, small-scale communities. It is an obvious fact that the State under the Committee of Public Safety, under the Consulate or the Empire, was more omnipresent, was capable of demanding more of the nation, than the State under Louis XVI. No hereditary sovereign of the eighteenth century would have dreamed of imposing mass conscription. The suppression of personal inequalities brings with it both the right to vote and the obligation for military service, and military service was universal long before the franchise. The revolutionary insists on the suppression of absolutism, the participation of the people's representatives in the drafting of laws, a free constitution, and finally, the

indirect election of the executive itself. The counter-revolutionary points out that power, though in theory absolute, was in fact limited by custom, by the privileges of the many intermediary bodies, and by unwritten laws. As a result of the French Revolution (and this probably applies to all revolutions) the concept of the State was not only rejuvenated but its apparatus given a new power.

The Socialists, oddly enough, appropriated some of the points in the counter-revolutionary argument. The elimination of the old inequalities of social status left no other distinction between man and man but that of money. The nobility had lost its political position, its prestige, and in large measure the economic foundation of its social rank: the ownership of land. But, under the pretext of equality, the bourgeoisie had come to monopolise both wealth and political power. One privileged minority had been replaced by another. In what way had the people benefited? Even more did the Socialists agree with the counter-revolutionaries in their analysis of individualism. They also described with horror the jungle in which the unprotected individual was now forced to live, lost and alone among millions of other individuals competing one against the other, all alike exposed to the vagaries of the market, the unpredictable somersaults of the trade cycle. The slogan 'organisation' superseded or was added to the slogan 'emancipation'—the deliberate organisation of economic life by the community to protect the weak from the strong, the poor from the rich, the economy itself from anarchy. But the same dialectic which accompanied the transition from the old France to the bourgeois society reproduced itself in an aggravated form in the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The denunciation of the trusts—vast concentrations of productive power in the hands of private persons—is one of the favourite theme-songs of the Left. The Left is the champion of the people and the scourge of the tyrant, and the big business man is the modern equivalent of the feudal lord who exerts his power over the humble and scorns the public interest. The solution applied by the left-wing parties was not to dissolve the trusts but to bring certain branches of industry and certain inordinately large concerns under State control.

The modern apparatus of industrial production involves a hierarchy which we might call 'techno-bureaucratic'. On the highest rungs of the ladder are the organisers or managers rather than the engineers or technicians properly so called. This hierarchy into which the workers are integrated is not altered

by a change of ownership. The directors of the Renault works or of the *Charbonnages de France* are no less capable than their predecessors of bringing pressure to bear on the Government in the interests of their concerns. It is true that nationalisation eliminates the political influence which the industrial bosses were alleged to have exercised *sub rosa.* The powers which they have been forced to surrender revert to the rulers of the State. The responsibilities of the latter tend to grow in proportion as those of the owners of the means of production diminish. When the State remains democratic, it is liable to be at once wide-ranging in its activities and weak at the centre. When a totalitarian party takes possession of the State it reconstitutes and turns to its own ends the combination of economic and political power with which the Left was wont to reproach the trusts.

In other words, nationalisation, in the way it has been carried out in France, in Britain or in Russia, does not protect the worker against his bosses, the consumer against the trusts; it eliminates shareholders, boards of directors, financiers— those whose connection with a given concern was more theoretical than real or who exercised an indirect influence on its destinies by the manipulation of shares. We need not concern ourselves with the classic objection that nationalisation not only fails to abolish but actually accentuates the economic disadvantages of monopoly. What is more to the point is the fact that in this field the reforms of the Left end up by achieving a redistribution of power without either raising up the poor and the humble or casting down the rich and the powerful.

In Western societies, the techno-bureaucratic hierarchy is limited to one sector of the industrial apparatus. A multiplicity of small or medium-sized enterprises remain untouched, agriculture retains a variety of systems (peasant owners, farmers, *métayers*), the retail system juxtaposes giants and dwarfs—the chain store and the family grocer. The structure of Western societies is a complex one: the descendants of the pre-capitalist artistocracy, families whose wealth is several generations old, small-scale business men and peasant proprietors, represent a rich variety of social forms and independent groups. Millions of people can live independently of the State. The extension of the techno-bureaucratic hierarchy would mean the liquidation of this complex system of social relations; individuals would no longer be beholden to other individuals as such, but all would be beholden to the State. The Left strives to free the individual from immediate servitude; but it might end up by submitting him to the more dangerous servitude, remote in law but omnipresent in fact, of the all-powerful State. The bigger

the area covered by the State, the less likely is it to be a democratic State, that is a framework for peaceful competition between relatively autonomous groups. The day when society as a whole becomes comparable to a single gigantic enterprise must surely bring an irresistible temptation for the men at the top to be totally indifferent to the approval or disapproval of the masses below.

As such a situation develops, the survival of traditional relationships and local communities appears not so much a brake on democracy as a safeguard against the absorption of the individual into vast impersonal bureaucracies—inhuman monsters looming up from the depths of industrial civilisation. The old hierarchies, weakened and purified by time and circumstance, seem not so much the defenders of ancient iniquities as bulwarks against the absolutist tendencies of socialism. Against the impersonal despotism of the latter, conservatism becomes the ally of liberalism. If the brakes inherited from the past finally lost their hold, there would be nothing left to impede the advent of the totalitarian State.

Thus an optimistic interpretation of history with the liberation of humanity as the ultimate goal is replaced by a pessimistic version according to which totalitarianism, the enslavement of mankind body and soul, is the inevitable result of a movement which begins with the abolition of ancient wrongs and ends with the destruction of every human liberty. The example of Soviet Russia encourages this pessimism, already envisaged by some of the more lucid minds of the nineteenth century. Tocqueville, for example, foretold with devastating clarity what the irresistible impetus of democracy would lead to if representative institutions were swept away by the impatience of the masses, if the sense of liberty, aristocratic in origin, fell into decay. Historians like Burckhardt and Renan dreaded a return to the tyrannies of the dark ages far more than they hoped for the reconciliation of mankind.

There is no necessity to subscribe to either of these extreme views. The inevitable transformations of economic techniques and structures and the expansion of the State do not necessarily involve either liberation or enslavement. But every advance in liberation carries the seed of a new form of enslavement. The myth of the Left creates the illusion that the movement of history is a continual process of accumulating gains. Thanks to socialism, real liberties would be added to the formal liberties won by the bourgeoisie. In fact, of course, history is a dialectic. Not in the strict sense which the Communists now give to that word. Régimes are not contradictory; there is no absolute necessity for a violent break between one régime and the next.

But, within each régime, men are faced with different problems and as a result of this the same institutions change their meaning. Against the power of a plutocracy, men call on universal suffrage or on the State; against a fast-encroaching technocracy, men fight to safeguard local or professional autonomies.

In any given régime, it is essential to achieve a reasonable compromise between conflicting demands which, carried to extremes, would be totally incompatible. Let us assume, for example, that we want to achieve equality of incomes. Under the capitalist system, taxation constitutes one of the instruments for reducing the gap between rich and poor. This instrument is not ineffective provided that the burden of direct taxation is equitably shared and that the national income per head of population is sufficiently high. But after a certain point, which varies from country to country, the levying of taxes provokes evasion and fraud and discourages voluntary saving. We must accept a certain measure of inequality, inseparable from the very principle of competition. We must accept the fact that death duties, although they hasten the dispersal of big fortunes, do not abolish them completely. There can be no indefinite progress towards equality of incomes.

Defeated by the hard logic of reality, the Leftist may then demand a completely planned economy. But in such a society a new form of inequality would arise. In theory, the planners would be capable of reducing inequality of income to whatever extent they might consider desirable. What extent would seem to them consistent with the collective interest, with their own interest? Neither experience nor psychological probability suggests a reply that would be favourable to the egalitarian cause. The planners will increase wage differentials in order to encourage individual effort: how can one blame them? The Left clamours for equality as long as it is in opposition and the capitalists are responsible for the production of wealth. As soon as the Left comes to power it finds itself having to reconcile the desire for equality with the need for maximum production. As for the planners, their estimate of the value of their services will hardly be less than that of their capitalist predecessors.

In default of such a massive increase of the collective resources as lies far beyond the horizons of history, no régime of whatever complexion can tolerate more than a certain dose of economic equality. As one form of inequality, bound up with a certain form of economic organisation, is abolished, another automatically takes its place. How far the equalisation of

incomes can be achieved is determined by the rigidity of the social structure and by human egotism, but also by collective moral pressures which are no less legitimate than protests against inequality. The rewarding of the most active and the most gifted is not only just but probably at the same time necessary if productivity is to go on increasing.* Absolute equality, in a country such as England, would mean that the minority which maintains and enriches the cultural and scientific life of the nation would be deprived of the conditions necessary to its creative existence.†

The social legislation advocated by the Left and supported by almost the whole of public opinion is subject to a law of diminishing returns, and cannot be indefinitely extended without compromising other equally legitimate interests. For example, family allowances financed by a tax on wages, as in France, favour fathers of large families and the aged at the expense of the young and the unmarried, in other words the most productive. Should the Left be more concerned with alleviating suffering than with encouraging economic progress? In this case, the Communists could hardly be said to belong to the Left. But in a period when men are obsessed by questions of living standards, the non-communist Left should be as anxious to raise productivity as the capitalists used to be. In the long run such an increase is no less consistent with the welfare of the individual than with that of the community as a whole. There again, idealist aims collide with the social mass, but also the inevitable contradiction arises between the different slogans, 'to each according to his needs' and 'to each according to his labours'.

In England, food subsidies combined with indirect taxes have resulted in a redistribution of expenditure within the family, According to statistics quoted by the *Economist* in April 1950, families of four with incomes of less than £500 a year received from the State an average of 57 shillings per week and paid out 67.8 shillings in taxes and contributions to the social services. In particular, they paid 31.4 shillings worth of taxes on alcohol and tobacco. Carried to these lengths, the policy of the Welfare State is liable to defeat its own object. The reduction both of State expenditure and of taxation would perhaps have a very different meaning today from the meaning it would have had fifty years ago. The 'one-way' system is the big illusion in politics, ideological monomania is the cause of disaster.

* Neither enormous incomes nor big fortunes are inevitable at the present day. Just as the former are in process of being reduced by the State

in the democratic capitalist countries, so the latter survive only on a much smaller scale.

† Bertrand de Jouvenel has calculated that in 1947-48, in order to bring the lowest incomes up to a level of £250 a year, it would have been necessary to limit the highest incomes to £500 a year, tax free. *The Ethics of Redistribution* (Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 86.

The men of the Left make the error of claiming for certain economic techniques a magic prestige which belongs in reality only to the realm of ideas: public ownership or full employment must be judged by their efficacy not by their theoretical moral validity. The Left thinks in terms of an imaginary continuity, as though the future was always better than the past, as though, the party of 'progress' being always in the right as against the conservatives, one could take the legacy of the past for granted and concern oneself exclusively with new conquests.

Whatever the régime—aristocratic, bourgeois or socialist— neither freedom of thought nor human fellowship is ever completely guaranteed. The true Left is that which continues faithfully to invoke, not liberty or equality, but fraternity— in other words, love.

Idea and Reality

In all Western countries, the different aspects of the Right-Left antithesis which we have isolated here for the sake of our analysis are present in greater or less degree. The Left everywhere preserves certain features which are characteristic of the struggle against the *Ancien Régime;* everywhere it is recognisable by a regard for social justice, for full employment and the nationalisation of the means of production; everywhere it is compromised by the severities of Stalinist totalitarianism which claims to be left-wing and which cannot be entirely disavowed; everywhere the slowness of parliamentary action and the impatience of the mass threaten the Left with a dissociation between political and social values. But there are vast differences between countries where these factors are inextricably mixed and those where one factor alone holds the floor. France belongs in the first category, Great Britain in the second.

Great Britain succeeded without much difficulty in laughing Fascism out of court. Men like William Joyce* were driven by the course of events to choose between recantation and treachery. (He chose treachery.) The leaders of the

trade unions are conscious of belonging to the national community and convinced that they can improve the condition of the workers without repudiating the traditions of the country or interrupting the continuity of its constitutional life. As for the Communist Party, incapable now of getting a single member into Parliament, it has managed to acquire, through infiltration and the setting up of cells, some important positions in the unions, and numbers some noteworthy adherents or sympathisers among the intelligentsia, but it plays no serious role either in politics or in the Press. The left-wing weeklies are fairly influential; but though they are generous in conceding to others—Continentals or Asiatics—the blessings of the Popular Front or Sovietisation, they would not dream of demanding the same for their own country.

In the absence of either a Fascist or a Community Party, the discussion of ideas in Britain is related to immediate and practical problems and conflicts: on the social plane, the conflict between the desire for equality and the hierarchical class system, and in the economic field, between the collectivist tendency (public ownership, full employment, controls) and the predilection for the rules of the free market. On the one side, egalitarianism versus conservatism, on the other, socialism versus free enterprise. The Conservative Party seeks to call a halt to the redistribution of incomes at the point which it has now reached; the Labour Party, at least the 'neo-Fabian' intellectuals, would like to take this further. The Conservative Party has dismantled the apparatus of controls which Labour took over from the war period; the Labour Party might be inclined, on returning to power, partially to restore it.

The situation would be clearer if there were three parties instead of two. The liberalism of the Tories is somewhat questionable. Among people who belong to the moderate Left (as we would call it in France), men of reason, reformists, there are many who hesitate to give their votes to Labour with its State Socialist tendencies. The spirit of the nonconformist Left, not to be confused with the socialist Left, remains unrepresented.

* Better known, during the war, as Lord Haw-Haw.

The disappearance of the Liberal Party as a political force is partly the result of historical circumstance (the Lloyd George crisis after the First World War) and partly due to the electoral system which ruthlessly eliminates third parties. But it also has a historical significance. The essentials of liberalism —the respect for individual liberty and moderate government — are no longer the monopoly of a single party: they have become the property

of all. When the right to religious heterodoxy or political dissent is no longer questioned, nonconformism has, so to speak, exhausted its function since it has won its battle. The moral inspiration of the English Left, born of a secularised Christianity, is henceforth directed towards social reform, for which the Labour Party has taken the initiative and the responsibility. In a sense, the victory of the nineteenth-century Left was almost too complete; liberalism is no longer its exclusive property. In another sense, the old Left has been overtaken by events: the Party of the workers is today inevitably the champion of the underprivileged.

In 1945 Labour won a victory the extent of which surprised everyone, including itself. For five years it was free to legislate to its heart's content, and it made full use of this right. The England of 1950 was certainly profoundly different from that of 1900 or of 1850. Inequality of income, more extreme half a century ago than in any other Western country, is today less marked than anywhere on the Continent. The home of private enterprise has become the model of social legislation. One sector of industry is nationalised, agricultural marketing is State organised. But, however great the changes, England is still recognisably the same country. The living and working conditions of the proletariat have improved, but they have not been radically altered. Labour diplomacy, successful in India, less happy in the Near East, does not differ in kind from that of a Conservative Government. So that's all that Socialism meant!

On both sides, there has been a good deal of self-questioning. The Conservatives have now regained confidence, convinced that, as in the last century, Britain has imported the essentials of the continental revolutions without spilling any blood and without sacrificing the country's age-old traditions. On the Labour side, especially among the intellectuals, there is uncertainty about the future. The *New Fabian Essays* published in 1952 revealed a desire to alter the emphasis of Socialist policy towards eliminating wealth as such rather than fighting against poverty—towards liquidating the big fortunes which allow individuals to live without working, and extending public ownership in order to close the gap between the highest and the lowest wages. As long as the greater part of the economy is in private hands the level of the highest salaries is determined by them. The State would lose its ablest servants if it gave the directors of the nationalised industries much smaller salaries than those of the big private concerns. Once the old ruling class was finally ruined, the still essentially aristocratic nature of English society would be profoundly modified.

Such theories are part of the normal development of a political doctrine. Having realised the major part of their programme, the English Socialists remain undecided on whether the next phase should be one of consolidation or of further advance. The moderates, though they do not admit it openly, are inclined to accept the idea of consolidation and joining forces with the more enlightened Conservatives who are also preoccupied with economic questions of considerable importance for the future: how to avoid inflation under full employment when the unions can negotiate freely with the employers; how to keep the economy flexible and encourage initiative; how to limit or reduce taxation; where to find the necessary capital to invest in industries which are not assured of the future; in short, how to make a free society assimilate a certain dose of socialism and guarantee the security of all its members, without keeping down the most gifted or putting a brake on the development of the community as a whole.

Discussion is still possible between Right and Left in Britain, between those who are disappointed by the inadequacy of Labour's reforms and those who are alarmed at the prospect of their being extended, between those who want less inequality and more public ownership and those who are more concerned with urging people on to greater effort and rewarding initiative and output, between those who put their trust in 'physical controls' and those who want to return to the mechanism of the market. The English ruling class has acquiesced with good grace in the sacrifice of part of its wealth and power. It preserves an aristocratic style of life, but continues to seek a *modus vivendi* with those who represent the forces of the future. Maybe the Right is not especially enamoured of the new Britain in which the Left is more at home. Out of prudence, if not with enthusiasm, everyone accepts it. When Winston Churchill, interpreting *The Road to Serfdom* in the context of an election campaign, made his famous remark about the Gestapo as the inevitable accompaniment of a planned economy, he frightened no one; in fact, he made most of the British electors laugh. A few decades or a few centuries from now, however, what looks to us today like an electioneering squib may seem to have contained a prophetic truth. Political thought in Britain is contemporaneous with reality. The same could certainly not be said of France.

The ideological chaos in present-day France is a result of a confusion of the various possible interpretations of the Right-Left antithesis, and this confusion is itself largely attributable to the facts. Elements of the pre-industrial society have survived more generally in France than in countries

such as Britain and the Scandinavian states. The conflict between the *Ancien Régime* and the Revolution is still as actual there as the conflict between liberalism and socialism. But ideas anticipate events, and the dangers of a technological civilisation are already being denounced before Frenchmen have begun to reap the benefits it can offer.

France's western departments are still dominated by the conflict between conservatism, allied to religion, and the •party of progress', lay, rationalist and egalitarian. The Right is Catholic and tied to the privileged classes; the Left is mostly represented by professional politicians of the lower middle classes. Socialists seem to be following in the footsteps of the Radicals, as are the Communists themselves in certain parts of Central and Southern France.

Other departments offer more or less the French equivalent of the underdeveloped countries. Certain regions south of the Loire, with few industries and an anachronistic agriculture, have preserved an individualistic structure, and people are liable to vote for local bourgeois notables. The *Rassemblement des Gauches Démocratiques* and the Independents are well represented there, as also are the Communists either because of left-wing traditions or because of the virtual lack of economic development.

Then there are the industrial departments, the big urban agglomerations, which constitute a third type. Between 1948 and 1951, the R.P.F. (de Gaulle's *Rassemblement du Peuple Français*) and the Communists made most headway there, gaining votes from the M.R.P. (the Catholic *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) and the Socialists.

The heterogeneous nature of the social structure is reflected in that of the parties. To judge from the replies to a poll organised a year or two ago, the majority of the French Communist electors have the same aspirations as are represented in Britain by the left wing of the Labour Party. But if it is true that many Communist voters are unconscious Bevanites, the fact demands an explanation instead of providing one. Why do the French electors fall into the trap which the British, German and Belgian electors manage to avoid? The juxtaposition of the three socio-political structures—the Western provinces, the underdeveloped areas and the industrial towns —may offer a partial explanation.

More plausibly than in the Protestant countries, Communism in France claims to be the heir of the bourgeois rationalist revolution. In the economically backward regions, it recruits followers (who are also often

traditionally left-wing in sympathy) for reasons similar to those which explain its success in Africa or in Asia: it stirs up the quarrels between farmers, *métayers* and landowners, it encourages the claims of the least privileged, it exploits the discontent created by economic stagnation. And in the industrial areas, Communism has won the allegiance of the proletarian masses as a result of the failure of the reformist trade unions and the Socialist Party. This failure, in its turn, can be attributed, among other causes, to persistently low productivity in the backward regions and the continued survival of pre-capitalist elements in the more advanced areas.

The same diversity of social forms explains the limits of Communist advance in spite of the millions of Communist voters. There are too many peasant proprietors and Red-hating petty bourgeois for the Party to win more than a considerable minority of votes in the agricultural areas. And the wish to maintain an individual way of life is too firmly rooted in every stratum of the population to allow the Communists more than a third of the votes even in the industrial regions.

The followers of the R.P.F., like those of the Communist Party and for the same reason, were recruited from a variety of sources. In the regions where the struggle between the *Ancien Régime* and the Revolution, between the Church and the anti-clericals, is still a live issue, they were largely identical with those of the old reactionary or moderate right-wing parties, which suffered in consequence. In the northern industrial cities, the R.P.F. voters were of a different type; some were won over from the Socialists, some from the M.R.P.. others from the Radicals or the Moderates. The combination of anti-Communism and traditional rationalism recalled the ideology of so-called 'right-wing revolutionary' parties which borrow their social values from the Left and their political values from the Right.

The Socialist Party and one wing of the M.R.P. envisaged, soon after the end of the Second World War, the establishment of a French equivalent to the British Labour Movement, but they were deserted by their potential followers. This failure was due only in a minor degree to a lack of leadership: the past, in the shape of the struggle between the Church and the Revolution, remained too actual, too many workers were deceived by the confusion between Communism and advanced Socialism, too many petty bourgeois were inclined to conservatism by their attachment to the old way of life. French 'Labourism' was doomed never to leave the realm of dreams.

Nowhere is the antithesis between Right and Left so striking as it is in France, and nowhere is it more ambiguous: French conservatism also expresses itself in ideological terms. Frenchmen like to believe that their country in its finest hour lived through and epitomised all the battles of the century. The Left conjures up for itself a unilinear history in which St. George will end up by slaying the dragon. But those who refuse to recognise either Right or Left sometimes transport themselves in their imaginations into a rationalised society where the planners will have abolished not only misery but also romance, individualism and liberty. Political thought in France is either nostalgic or Utopian.

Political action also tends to become divorced from actuality. The social security plan introduced in France after the war is in advance of, the commercial apparatus behind, the country's industrial development. France is plagued by the same fallacies as the countries where industrialisation is developed through imitation of foreign models. To import machines and factories ready-made is to risk confusing the technical optimum calculated by the experts with the economic optimum which varies with local conditions. The modern tax system is effective only in so far as the taxpayers belong to the same world of ideas as the legislators and administrators. In a country where so many agricultural and commercial concerns are run without book-keeping, no system of taxation can be made to work entirely effectively.

It is a favourite French pastime to inveigh against capitalism. But who and where are the capitalists in France? The few big factory owners or industrialists—Citroën, Michelin, Boussac? The family concerns of Lyons or the North, Catholic and *bien-pensants?* The higher ranks of the managerial class, both in private and nationalised industry? The big commercial banks, some of which are controlled by the State? The directors of the thousands of small and medium-sized concerns, a few of which are models of intelligent administration and the rest artificial survivals? Capitalism in the sense in which Marx meant it, the capitalism of Wall Street or colonial big business, offers a better target for invective than this diversified, diffused capitalism, this bourgeoisie which includes much more than a minority of the nation, if one adds the would-be to the real ones.

It is by no means impossible to define, in France, an anti-capitalist Left or a Keynesian and anti-Malthusian Left, but on one condition—that one does not allow oneself to be misled by the old Right-Left antithesis or by Marxian formulas, but recognises the diversity of the structures of which the present society is composed, the diversity of the problems arising from this and of

the steps necessary to solve them. Historical awareness should make this diversity clear: ideology, even when it is dressed in the tawdry finery of the philosophy of history, obscures it.

The Left is animated by three ideas, which are not necessarily contradictory, but usually divergent: *liberty,* against arbitrary power and for the rights of the individual; *organisation,* for the purpose of substituting a rational order in place of tradition or the anarchy of private enterprise; and *equality,* against the privileges of birth or of wealth.

The *organising* Left tends to become *authoritarian,* because free governments act slowly and are held in check by the opposition of private interests or prejudices, *national,* if not nationalist, because the State alone is capable of fulfilling its programme, and sometimes *imperialist,* because the planners inevitably tend to require more space and bigger resources. The *liberal* Left turns against socialism, because it cannot but be aware of the hypertrophy of the State and the return to arbitrary rule, this time bureaucratic and anonymous, and against the nationalist Left which repudiates the ideal of internationalism. As for the *egalitarian* Left, it seems to be condemned to a perpetual opposition against the rich and against the powerful, who are sometimes the same people and sometimes in rivalry. Which, one may ask, is the true Left, the eternal Left?

Perhaps those inveterate Leftists, the editors of *Esprit,* have provided us unwittingly with the answer to this question. In a special number which they devoted some time ago to the 'American Left* they admitted quite honestly the difficulty of establishing the transatlantic equivalent of this European term. American society has never known the equivalent of the struggle against the *Ancien Régime,* and no Labour or Socialist Party exists there, the two traditional parties having suppressed all attempts to establish a third, 'progressive', party. The principles of the American constitution or of the country's economic system are not seriously questioned. Political controversies there are more often technical than ideological.

On the basis of these facts, one can argue in two ways. Either one will say, like one of the American contributors to the review: "The United States has always been a socialist nation, in the sense that it has improved the living conditions of the underprivileged classes and guaranteed social justice".* Or, like a good European Socialist, one will sigh for "the creation of a Labour

Party, the first condition for any transformation of American society", and one will assert that "the realisation of socialism" in the United States is a "necessity of world importance".† Obviously the editors of *Esprit* were inclined to the second view. But after having given this involuntary proof of prejudice, when the time comes to round off the survey one of them suddenly forgets the conformism of the intelligentsia and writes: "One must ask oneself if it is still possible to talk of a Left in a country where there are no more misgivings about society. . . . For the man of the Left— to us Frenchmen at any rate—is a man who does not always agree with the policy of his country and who knows that there is no mystic guarantee that it will always be in the right, a man who protests against colonialism, who does not tolerate atrocities, even against enemies, even by way of reprisal. . . ." (I have omitted a phrase in which J.-M. Domenech spoke of a bacteriological war "which is, perhaps, already taking place"). "Can one speak of a Left in a country where the simple feeling of human solidarity with the suffering and the oppressed has become blunted, the feeling which once made the European and American masses rise up in defence of Sacco and Vanzetti?"‡

If such is the true man of the Left, opposed to all orthodoxies and moved by all human suffering, has he vanished only from the United States? Is the Communist, for whom the Soviet Union is always right, a man of the Left? Those who demand liberty for all the peoples of Asia and Africa, but not for the Poles or the East Germans, are they men of the Left? The language of the historical Left may have triumphed in our day; the spirit of the eternal Left is surely dying, when pity itself is a 'one-way' virtue.

* A. M. Rose in *Esprit,* November 1952, p. 604.

† Michel Crozier in *Esprit,* November 1952, pp. 584-5.

‡ J.-M. Domenech in *Esprit,* November 1952, pp. 701-2.

CHAPTER II

THE MYTH OF THE REVOLUTION

THE idea of Progress is implicit in the myth of the Left, which feeds on the idea of a continuous movement. The myth of the Revolution has a significance which is at once complementary and opposed to this: it fosters the expectation of a break with the normal trend of human affairs. The second myth, like the first, it seems to me, is born of a rethinking of the past. The men who seem to us, looking back, to have been the precursors of the French Revolution because they disseminated a way of thought incompatible with that of the *Ancien Régime,* neither heralded nor desired the apocalyptic collapse of the old world. Almost all of them, though bold in theory, showed the same prudence as did Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the role of counsellor to the Throne or legislator. Most of them were inclined towards optimism: once tradition, prejudice and fanaticism were put aside, once men were enlightened, the natural order of things would assert itself. By 1791 or 1792, the Revolution was felt by most contemporary thinkers, including the *philosophes,* to have been a catastrophe. In retrospect, however, people came to lose the sense of catastrophe and to remember only the grandeur of the event.

Among those who followed the party of progress, some did their best to forget the terror, the despotism, the cycle of wars, all the blood-soaked vicissitudes of which the bright, heroic days of the storming of the Bastille or the Feast of the Federation had been the starting point. The internecine struggles, the military glories and the military defeats, had merely been the accidental accompaniment of the Revolution. The irresistible drive towards the liberation of mankind and the rational organisation of society, interrupted by royalist or religious reaction, would continue notwithstanding, peacefully perhaps, with a limited use of force if need he.

Others put the accent on the seizure of power, on subversion and the overthrow of the State; they had faith in violence as the only means of knocking the future into shape. The champions of the revolutionary myth mostly subscribe to the same system of values as the reformists; they envisage the same end—a peaceful, liberal society governed by reason. But for them mankind will never realise its vocation, will never control its own destiny,

except by a promethean gesture, which becomes a valid end in itself as well as an essential means.

Are revolutions worthy of so much honour? The men who conceive them are not those who carry them out. Those who begin them rarely live to see their end, except in exile or in prison. Can they really be the symbol of a humanity which is the master of its own destiny if no man recognises his handiwork in the achievement which results from the savage free-for-all struggle?

Revolution and Revolutions

The word revolution, in the current language of sociology, means the sudden and violent supplanting of one regime by another. If we accept this definition, we must reject certain usages of the term which are ambiguous or misleading. In an expression such as industrial revolution', the term simply suggests profound and rapid changes. To speak of a 'working-class revolution' in England is to emphasise the importance, real or alleged, of the reforms carried out by the British Government between 1945 and 1950, although these changes, being neither violent nor unconstitutional, cannot be placed in the same historical category as the events which took place in France between 1789 and 1797. or in Russia between 1917 and 1921. Labour's achievement, in essence, is certainly *not* revolutionary in the sense in which this epithet can be applied to that of the Jacobins or of the Bolsheviks.

Even if one discards fallacious usages, some ambiguity remains. Concepts never exactly fit the facts: the former are precise, the latter vague. One could think of innumerable cases where hesitation would be justified. The accession to power of National Socialism was legal and the subsequent violence was ordained by the State. Can one, in spite of its legal nature, call this transition a revolution because of the suddenness of the changes brought about in the personnel of the Government and the form of the country's institutions? At the other extreme, do the *pronunciamientos* of the South American republics deserve to be called revolutions when all they do is to replace one officer by another or at most a soldier by a civilian or vice versa, without effecting any real change either from one ruling class to another or from one form of government to another? Legal continuity has been broken, but there has been no real constitutional upheaval; the changeover, with or without bloodshed, from one leader to another, the comings and goings between palace and prison, are accompanied by no institutional changes.

It is not vitally important to give a dogmatic answer to these questions. Definitions are not true or false, but more or less useful or convenient. There is no such thing as an unalterable essence of revolution: the concept merely provides us with a means of grasping the significance of certain phenomena and of thinking clearly about them.

It seems to me to be reasonable to apply the term *coup d'état* either to a change of constitution illegally decreed by the holder of power (e.g. Napoleon III in 1851) or to the seizure of the State by a group of armed men which does not (whether it involves bloodshed or not) involve the introduction of a new ruling class or a different form of government. Revolution is more than a matter of 'Box and Cox'. On the other hand, the accession of Hitler is no less revolutionary because he was legally appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg. The use of violence followed rather than preceded his accession, and, as a result of this, certain juridical characteristics of the revolutionary phenomenon were lacking. Sociologically, however, the essential traits are there: the exercise of power by a minority which ruthlessly suppresses its adversaries, creates a new State, and dreams of disfiguring the nation.

In themselves, these verbalistic arguments are of very minor significance, but discussions about the meaning of words often reveal the heart of the matter. I remember how in Berlin in 1933 the favourite argument among Frenchmen revolved around the question of whether or not what was happening was a revolution. They did not ask themselves whether or not the appearance or the masquerade of legality precluded reference to the precedents of Cromwell or of Lenin. Instead they denied with fury, as one of my colleagues did at the *Société Française de Philosophic* in 1938, that the noble term of revolution could be applied to such prosaic events as those which shook Germany in 1933. And yet, what more does one need to qualify as a revolutionary than to have brought about changes of personnel, ruling class, constitution and ideology?

To such a question, my compatriots in Berlin would have replied that the legality of the January 30 appointment and the absence of disorders in the streets represented a fundamental difference between the accession of the Third Reich and that of the Republic in 1792 or of Communism in 1917. But surely, in the last analysis, it matters little whether one sees them as two kinds of the same species or as two different species.

Others denied that National Socialism had brought about a revolution, because they regarded as it counter-revolutionary. It is permissible to speak of counter-revolution when the old régime has been restored, when the men of the past return to power, when the ideas or institutions which the revolutionaries of today bring with them are those which the revolutionaries of yesterday had abolished. There again, marginal cases are legion. A counter-revolution is never exclusively a restoration, and since every revolution repudiates to a certain extent the one which preceded it, it is bound to reveal certain counter-revolutionary characteristics. But neither Fascism nor National Socialism was entirely, or essentially, counterrevolutionary, though both borrowed a good deal of their terminology from the conservatives. The Nazis attacked not only the religious traditions of Christianity, but also the social traditions of the aristocracy and of bourgeois liberalism: the 'Germanisation' of Christianity, the regimenting of the masses, the 'leader principle' have a strictly revolutionary significance. National Socialism did not represent a return to the past; it broke with the past as radically as Communism.

The truth is, of course, that when people speak of revolution, when they ask themselves if such and such a sudden and violent upheaval is worthy to enter the temple in which 1789, the *Trois Glorieuses* and the 'ten days which shook the world' occupy the places of honour, they base themselves, consciously or unconsciously, on two ideas: first, that revolutions, wherever they occur, whether they involve bloodshed or not, and whether they are successful or abortive, can be included in the sacred canon only in so far as they can be squared with the ideology of the Left, humane, liberal and egalitarian; and second, that they fulfil their object and justify themselves only if they result in a reversal of the existing system of ownership. In the perspective of history, these two ideas arc prejudices pure and simple.

Every sudden and violent change of régime entails economic gains and losses which are equally unjust, and accelerates the circulation of wealth and property between the classes. But it does not necessarily introduce a new conception of property rights. According to Marxism, the abolition of private ownership of the means of production constitutes the essential characteristic of a revolution. But neither in the past nor at the present day has the downfall of thrones or republics, the overthrow of the State by active minorities, always coincided with a disruption of juridical norms.

It would be wrong to suggest that violence is inseparable from the values of the Left: in fact the opposite is nearer the truth. Revolutionary power is by

definition a tyrannical power. It operates in defiance of the law, it expresses the will of a minority group, it is not, and cannot be, concerned with the interests of this or that section of the people. The duration of the tyrannical phase varies according to the circumstances, but it is never possible to dispense with it—or, more exactly, when it is avoided, there has been reform but no revolution. The seizure and exercise of power by violence presuppose conflicts which negotiation and compromise have failed to resolve—in other words the failure of democratic procedures. Revolution and democracy are contradictory notions.

It is therefore equally unreasonable either to condemn or to exalt revolutions in principle. Men and groups being what they are—obstinate in the defence of their interests, slaves of the present, rarely capable of sacrifices even when these would safeguard their future, inclined to oscillate between resistance and concessions rather than make a decisive stand—revolutions will probably remain inseparable from the ways of human societies. Too often, a ruling class betrays the community for which it is responsible, refuses to recognise the signs of new times. The Meiji reformers in Japan and the Kemalists in Turkey ousted a decaying ruling class in order to rebuild a political and social order. They could not have carried out their task in such a short time had they not crushed all opposition and imposed by force a regime which the majority of the nation would probably have rejected. Rulers who violate tradition and legality in order to regenerate their countries are not always tyrants. Peter the Great and the Emperor of Japan were legitimate sovereigns when they undertook a task comparable with that of Kemal Ataturk and even, up to a point, that of the Bolsheviks.

Recourse to violence by a minority is often made inevitable, and sometimes desirable, by the inertia of the State, the decline of the élite, or anachronistic institutions. The man of reason, especially the man of the Left, must surely prefer therapeutic methods to the surgeon's knife, must prefer reform to revolution, as he must prefer peace to war and democracy to despotism. Revolutionary violence may seem to him sometimes to be the inevitable accompaniment or the essential condition of changes which he desires. He can never regard it as good in itself.

Experience, which sometimes excuses violence, also proves the disconnection between governmental instability and the transformation of the social order. France in the nineteenth century experienced more revolutions but a much slower economic evolution than Great Britain. A century ago, Prévost-Paradol deplored the fact that France so often indulged in the luxury

of a revolution yet was incapable of achieving the reforms which most thinking people agreed were necessary. Today, the word revolution is extremely fashionable, and the country seems to have fallen back into the old rut.

The United States on the other hand has preserved its constitution intact for nearly two centuries; indeed it has gradually come to acquire an almost mystical prestige. And yet American society has never ceased to undergo continuous and rapid transformation. Economic expansion and the social melting-pot have been absorbed into a constitutional framework without weakening or modifying it. A federation of agrarian States has become the greatest industrial power in the world without any recourse to illegality.

It is no doubt true that colonial civilisations are subject to different laws from, those of civilisations which have a long history behind them and are geographically confined. Constitutional instability remains none-the-less a sign of sickness rather than of health. Régimes which fall victim to popular uprisings or *coups d'état* have proved themselves guilty not of moral vices (they are often more humane than their conquerors) but of political errors. They have been incapable of giving way to an opposition, or of crushing the resistance of their own diehards, or of offering the prospect of reforms likely to appease the discontented or to satisfy the ambitious. Régimes such as those of Great Britain or the United States which have survived the onrush of historical change have given proof of the supreme virtue, which is a mixture of steadfastness and flexibility.

An 'advanced' intellectual would surely admit that the constant recurrence of *coups d'état* in various South American States is a symptom of crisis and a caricature of the progressive spirit. Perhaps he would even acknowledge, though not without reluctance, that constitutional continuity since the eighteenth century has been, for Great Britain and the United States, a great good fortune. And he would readily concede that the seizure of power by Fascists or National Socialists proves that the same means—violence and single party government—are not good in themselves but can be used for abominable ends. But he would reaffirm his faith in one final Revolution, the only authentic one, which would aim not to replace one power by another but to overthrow or at least to humanise all power.

Unfortunately, experience has so far failed to provide an example of a revolution which lives up to Marxist prophecies or the hopes of the humanitarians. The first Russian Revolution, the February Revolution,

brought about the collapse of a dynasty already undermined by the contradictions between traditional absolutism and the progress of ideas, by the incapacity of the Czar and by the consequences of a long-drawn-out war; the second, the November Revolution, consisted of the seizure of power by an armed minority taking advantage of the disorganisation of the State and the people's longing for peace. The industrial proletariat, small in number, played an important part in the second revolution; during the Civil War, the peasants' hostility to the counterrevolutionaries was probably decisive. In China, the industrial proletariat, even less numerous, did not provide the bulk of the Communist troops. It was in the countryside that the Party established itself, and it was there that it recruited its soldiers and prepared its victory: it was the intellectuals rather than the factory workers who provided the Party's cadres. The idea of a procession of the social classes, passing on the torch from one to the other, is no more than an illustration in a children's picture book.

The Marxist type of revolution has never come about because its very conception was mythical: neither the development of productive forces nor the coming of age of the working class paves the way for the overthrow of capitalism by the labouring masses, conscious of their mission. Proletarian revolutions, like all the revolutions of the past, merely entail the violent replacement of one élite by another. They present no special characteristic which would justify their being hailed as 'the end of pre-history'.

The Prestige of Revolution

The French Revolution belongs to the national heritage. Frenchmen have a weakness for the word revolution because they cherish the illusion of being associated with past glories. A writer like François Mauriac, when he talks about 'the Christian and Socialist revolution' which failed after the Liberation, disregards the claims of accuracy and proof. The expression arouses emotions, evokes memories and visions: no one could possibly define it.

A reform once accomplished changes something. A revolution seems capable of changing everything, since no one knows precisely what it will change. To the intellectual who turns to politics for the sake of diversion, or for a cause to believe in or a theme for speculation, reform is boring and revolution exciting. The one is prosaic, the other poetic, one is the concern of mere functionaries, the other that of the people risen up against their

exploiters. Revolution provides a welcome break with the everyday course of events and encourages the belief that all things are possible. The quasi-revolution of 1944 in France has bequeathed to those who lived through it (on the right side of the barricades) the nostalgic memory of a time of hope. They look back regretfully at the lost, lyrical illusion, they cannot bring themselves to criticise it; the 'others'—the men at the top, or the Soviet Union, or the United States of America—are responsible for the deception.

In love with ideas and indifferent to institutions, uncompromising critic of private life and unamenable, in politics, to reason and moderation, the Frenchman is quintessentially the revolutionary in theory and the conservative in practice. But the myth of the revolution is not restricted to France or the French intellectuals alone. It seems to me to have benefited from the prestige of other ideas and fetishes more often borrowed than authentic.

In the first place, it has benefited from the prestige of aesthetic modernism. The artist who denounces the philistines, and the Marxist who denounces the bourgeoisie, could consider themselves united in battle against a single enemy; and indeed the artistic *avant-garde* and the political *avant-garde* have often dreamed of a joint mission for the liberation of mankind.

In fact, however, during the nineteenth century the two vanguards were more often in a state of divorce than of wedlock. None of the big literary movements as such were involved with the political Left. Victor Hugo in his old age became the self-appointed oracle of democracy: in earlier days he had sung the praises of the past and he was never a revolutionary in the modern sense of the word. Among the foremost writers of the time, some, like Balzac, were reactionaries, others, like Flaubert, fundamentally conservative. The *poète maudit* was anything but revolutionary. The Impressionists, in spite of their advanced aesthetic ideas and their struggle with academism, never dreamed of challenging the social order or of drawing doves for the organisers of the 'night of the long knives'. The Socialists, for their part, whether theorists or militants, did not always subscribe to the system of values held by the literary or artistic *avant-garde.* Léon Blum, for example, considered Porto-Riche as one of the greatest writers of his time. On the advanced literary magazine *La Revue Blanche,* Blum was one of the few contributors with left-wing tendencies. The inventor of scientific socialism had old-fashioned tastes when it came to artistic matters.

It was only after the First World War that the alliance between the two *avant-gardes* really came for a time into its own. In France, the symbol of this alliance was surrealism; in Germany, the denizens of the literary coffee houses and the experimental theatre joined forces with the extreme Left, even with the Bolsheviks, to attack artistic conformism, moral conventions and the tyranny of money. Religion was as much the enemy as was capitalism.

This alliance did not last long. Ten years after the Russian Revolution, modernist architects had been sacrificed on the altar of neo-classicism, and I can still hear the voice of Jean-Richard Bloch declaring, with the passionate faith of the convert, that if the return to columns and porticos represented an artistic regression it was certainly a dialectical advance. All the most outstanding members of the literary and artistic *avant-garde* in the Soviet Union had disappeared by 1939. Painting had reverted to the standards of the *Salon* of fifty years ago; composers had been made to toe the academic line. Thirty-five years ago, the Soviet Union was the pride of the aesthetic Left which vaunted the genius and daring of its film directors, poets and theatrical producers; today the fatherland of the Revolution has become the home of a reactionary artistic orthodoxy.

Abroad, there were poets like Aragon who moved from Surrealism to Communism and became the most diligent of party hacks, prepared impartially to vilify or to extol the French Army, and others like Andre Breton who remained loyal to the non-conformist ideals of their youth. By adopting the bourgeois values of academism, the Soviet Union clarified the issue and revealed the disparity between genuine idealism and the all-powerful Party. But what was there left to cling on to when the world seemed to be divided between two opposing 'reactions'? The writer was reduced to solitude or sectarianism; the painter could pay lip service to the Party while ignoring its aesthetic doctrines.

The alliance of the two *avant-gardes* was born of a misunderstanding and exceptional circumstances. Out of a horror of conformism, artists join the party of revolt, but the ruling class which takes over the post-revolutionary society is hungry for stability, prestige and respect. There are obvious similarities between the bad taste of the Victorian bourgeoisie and that of the Soviet bourgeoisie of today, equally proud of their material success. Whether capitalist or managerial, the first generation to go through the stage of primary industrialisation demands solid furniture and imposing façades. The

personality of Stalin also helps to explain the extremes of obscurantism in the Russia of his day.

The connection between the revolutionary myth and the fetish of moral non-conformism is based on the same misunderstanding. Literary Bohemia felt itself to be linked to the extreme Left by a common hatred of bourgeois hypocrisy. At the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one, libertarian conceptions of morality—free love, legal abortion, etc.—were current in advanced political circles. Couples used to make it a point of honour not to present themselves before the civil authorities for the marriage ceremony, and the term 'partner' or 'mate' sounded better than 'wife' or 'husband', which stank of bourgeois respectability.

All that has been changed. Marriage and the family virtues are now exalted in the fatherland of the Revolution, and while divorce and abortion remain legal in certain circumstances, official propaganda is at pains to discourage them and to revive in the individual citizen a sense of the duty he has to subordinate his pleasures or his passions to the good of society as a whole. The traditionalists could hardly have demanded more.

Historians have often emphasised the puritanical tendencies of revolutionaries. Like the English Puritans and the Jacobins, the Bolsheviks have always strongly disapproved of moral laxity. The debauchee is suspect in their eyes, not because he violates the accepted code but because he abandons himself to vice at the expense of the common good, because he devotes too much time and energy to an unproductive activity.

The restoration of the family is quite a different phenomenon; it symbolises the return to ordinary life after the ferment of the Revolution and the obsessive preoccupation with politics. The family as an institution has a habit of outlasting the upheavals of states and societies. Shaken to its foundations by the collapse of the old order, it re-establishes itself as soon as the new order shows signs of lasting and the victorious elite acquires confidence in itself and its future. Sometimes the break-up leaves a heritage of liberation. In Europe, the authoritarian structure of the family was to some extent historically linked to the authoritarian structure of the State. The philosophy which advocates the right to vote is also in favour of the right to be happy. Whatever the future of Communism in China, the structure of the family will never be the same as it was—the emancipation of women is likely to be a permanent acquisition.

If the opposition to conventional morality served as a link between the political and the literary *avant-garde,* atheism would seem to be the link between the metaphysic of Revolt and the politics of the Revolution. There again, I think, the Revolution has been accorded an undeserved prestige: it is wrongly considered to be the inevitable offspring of humanism.

Marxist doctrine arose out of a criticism of religion which Marx had picked up from Feuerbach. Man 'alienates' himself by projecting on to God the perfections to which he aspires. God, far from being the creator of mankind, is himself merely an idol of the human imagination. Men must seek to attain on this earth the perfection which their imaginations have conceived but which still eludes them. The criticism of religion leads to the criticism of society. But why should this criticism necessarily lead to the revolutionary imperative?

Revolution cannot be equated with the essence of action; it is merely a modality thereof. Every action is in effect a negation of the 'given', but in this sense a reform is no less an action than is a revolution. The events of 1789 suggested to Hegel one of the themes of what has become the revolutionary myth: violence in the service of reason. But, unless one allows the class struggle a special intrinsic value, the effort to abolish anachronisms and build a society which conforms to the demands of reason does not require a sudden breach or a civil war. Revolution is neither a vocation nor a predestined end; it is a means.

In Marxism itself, one finds three divergent conceptions of revolution: first, a Blanquist conception, that of the seizure of power by a small group of armed men who, once they are masters of the State, proceed to transform its institutions; second, an evolutionary conception, according to which the society of the future must gradually mature within the present society until the final redeeming crisis arrives; and thirdly, the conception which has become that of the permanent revolution, according to which the proletarian party exerts a constant pressure on the bourgeois parties, taking advantage of the reforms grudgingly conceded by the latter to undermine the capitalist order and to prepare at once its own victory and the advent of socialism. Each of these three conceptions presupposes the necessity for violence, but the second, which is the least in harmony with the temperament of Marx himself and the most consistent with Marxist sociology, would postpone the final outbreak to an indefinite future.

At any given period a society, when considered realistically, reveals elements of different periods and styles which one might easily judge to be incompatible. Monarchy, parliament, trade unions, free health service, conscription, nationalised industries, Royal Navy—all these co-exist in present-day Britain. If historic régimes were as homogeneous as we make them out to be, revolutions would perhaps be inevitable in order to change from one to the other. From a watered-down capitalism to a pseudo-socialism, from aristocratic and bourgeois parliamentarianism to assemblies in which the unions and the mass parties are represented, the transition does not, in theory, involve bloodshed. It is circumstances which decide that.

An historical humanism—man in search of himself through successive régimes and empires—should not necessarily lead to the cult of revolution; only a dogmatic confusion between permanent aspirations and a certain technique of action can explain such an aberration. The choice of methods derives not from philosophic reflection but from experience and wisdom, unless it be granted that the class struggle has to pile up corpses in order to fulfil its role in history. Why should the victory of a single class result in the reconciliation of all mankind?

Marx progressed from atheism to revolution by way of a dialectic of history. Many intellectuals who will have nothing to do with the dialectic also arrive at the same conclusion, not because the Revolution promises to reconcile mankind or to solve the riddle of history, but because it destroys a hateful or mediocre world. The literary and the political *avant-garde* are brought into a kind of collusion by their common hatred of the established order or disorder. In other words, the Revolution benefits from the prestige of Revolt.

The word revolt, like the word nihilism, is today rather fashionable. It is used so frequently and loosely that people have come to forget precisely what it means. One wonders whether the majority of writers would not subscribe to the dictum of André Malraux: "The fundamental dignity of thought lies in the challenging of life and destiny, and any thought which really justifies the universe is worthless unless it is based on hope." In the twentieth century, it is certainly easier to condemn the world than to justify it.

As a metaphysic, the concept of revolt denies the existence of God, the foundations which religion or animism have traditionally given to moral values; it also emphasises the absurdity of the world and of human existence. As a historical analysis, it challenges society as such or the society of the

present. The one often leads to the other, but neither is bound to lead to revolution or to the values which the revolutionary cause claims to represent. He who protests against the fate meted out to mankind by a meaningless universe sometimes finds himself in sympathy with the revolutionaries, because indignation or hatred outweigh all other considerations, because, in the last resort, violence alone can appease his despair. But, just as logically, he might aim to dispel the illusions created by those incorrigible optimists who are so busy fighting the social symptoms of the human plight that they remain oblivious of its real depths. Some rebels regard action for its own sake as a suitable aim for an aimless destiny, others regard it merely as a contemptible diversion, an attempt by Man to conceal from himself the true vanity of his condition. The party of the Revolution pours scorn on the descendants of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche or Kafka as the intellectual Jeremiahs of a bourgeoisie which cannot console itself for the death of God because it is so conscious of its own death: the revolutionary, not the rebel, holds the key to transcendence and meaning—the historic future.

True, the rebels, the men of Revolt, also rebel against the established order. They regard most social rules and prohibitions as mere convention or hypocrisy. But many of them nevertheless subscribe to the values currently accepted in their social milieu, while others revolt against their own epoch but not against God or Fate. In the name of materialism and egoism, the Russian nihilists of the mid-nineteenth century in fact went along with the bourgeois socialist movement. Nietzsche and Bernanos, the one a believer and the other proclaiming the death of God, are authentic non-conformists. Both reject democracy, socialism, the adulation of the common man—the one in the name of an intuitive vision of the future, the other by invoking an idealised conception of the *Ancien Régime.* They are hostile or indifferent to the raising of living standards, the expansion of bourgeois materialism, the progress of technology. They are horrified by the vulgarity and baseness which seem to be part and parcel of electioneering and parliamentary practices—Bernanos hurled his invective at the pagan State, the garrulous Leviathan.

Since the defeat of the Fascist movements, most intellectuals of the Revolt and all those of the Revolution bear witness to an irreproachable conformism: they do not renounce the values of the societies they condemn. The French settler in Algeria, the Corsican functionary in Tunisia, may treat the natives with scant respect and scorn the idea of racial equality; but a right-wing intellectual in France would hardly dare to develop a philosophy of

colonialism, any more than a Russian intellectual would develop a philosophy of slave labour. The supporters of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco aroused indignation because they refused to bow down to modern ideas: democracy, equality between men of every class and race, economic and social progress, humanitarianism and pacifism. The revolutionaries of the 1950's may sometimes frighten, but they never shock.

There is not a Christian today, however reactionary, who would dare to say or even to think that the standard of living of the masses is of no importance. The so-called left-wing Christian is not so much a man who shows courage and freedom of thought as a man who has consented to absorb the strongest dose of the ideas current in secular circles. In the last resort, the 'progressive' Christian will consider a change of régime or an improvement in the material condition of the masses as indispensable for the propagation of Christian truth. The message of Simone Weil is not a left-wing message; it is a non-conformist message, reminding us of truths which we were no longer accustomed to hear.

It would be difficult to find, in present-day France, two truly incompatible philosophies such as those of the *Ancien Régime* and of Rationalism. The adversaries of today—apart from a few left-overs from Fascism—are brothers beneath the skin. Implicitly, Soviet Russian society may contain a system of values opposed to that of the West; explicitly, these two worlds mutually upbraid one another for violating their common values. The controversy about property rights and planning is concerned with means rather than ends.

Rebels or nihilists criticise the modern world, some for being what it wants to be, others for not being true to itself. The latter are today more numerous than the former. The most lively polemics break out not between these two but between intellectuals who are agreed on the essentials. To go for one another, they need not disagree about ultimate aims, they have merely to differ over the sacred word: Revolution.

Revolt and Revolution

The exchange of letters or articles between Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Francis Jeanson in *Les Temps Modernes* in August 1952 immediately assumed the character of a national dispute. I shall not presume to adjudicate the fight point by point or to analyse its rights and wrongs, but merely to try to grasp the significance of the revolutionary myth as represented by two distinguished writers during the seventh year of the Cold War.

The metaphysical positions of the protagonists are not far apart. No doubt the analysis of the human condition in *L'Etre et le Néant* is not the same as in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* or *La Peste* (in any case, these books are not strictly comparable); but for both Sartre and Camus God is dead and human existence meaningless, and in both there is the same striving after truth, the same intolerance of illusions and self-deceptions, and a similar approach to life, a sort of active stoicism. There could be no question of a clash between their respective attitudes towards fundamentals.

When they come to express their approval or disapproval— the latter more frequent than the former—they reveal like values. Both are humanitarian: they want to alleviate human suffering, to free the oppressed; they are against colonialism, Fascism, capitalism. Whether over Spain, Algeria or VietNam, Camus has never been guilty of departing from the progressive ideology. When Spain was admitted to UNESCO, he wrote an admirable letter of protest; when Soviet Russia and Czechoslovakia joined, he remained silent.

Unless his thought has profoundly altered since *L'Etre et le Néant.* Sartre does not interpret history as the development of spirit. He would not credit a revolution, of whatever sort, with an ontological significance. The classless society will not solve the mystery of our destiny, it will reconcile neither essence and existence nor men with one another. The existentialism of Sartre excludes belief in a historical totality. Each individual is plunged into history and chooses his destiny and his companions at his own risk. Camus would readily subscribe to such propositions.

Why then the split? The origin of it seems to have been the simple question which is continually setting friends, comrades, brothers at one another's throats: the question of what attitude to adopt towards the Soviet Union and Communism. The debate takes on a profound emotional intensity not when one protagonist has given and the other refused allegiance to the Party; it is enough that non-Communists should justify in different ways their refusal to join the Party—that some should call themselves non-Communist and others anti-Communist, that some should condemn Lenin as well as Stalin while others reserve their strictures for the latter alone —for men who, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, would be liquidated together, to come to regard themselves as mortal enemies.

At the time of the famous controversy, Jean-Paul Sartre had not yet made the journey to Vienna and Moscow. He could still write: "And if I am a secret sympathiser, a crypto, a fellow-traveller, how comes it that it is me

they hate and not you? But do not let us boast of the hate we provoke. I will tell you frankly that I profoundly regret this hostility, and sometimes I almost envy you the profound indifference they show towards you." He did not in any way deny the cruelties of the Soviet régime, the concentration camps. The time of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire,* of neutralism and the Third Force, was not long past. Camus denounced no less categorically than Sartre the evils of colonialism and Franco Spain. Both writers, free from political affiliations, condemned impartially whatever in their eyes deserved to be condemned. Where then was the difference? In vulgar terms, the reply would be that in the final resort Camus would choose the West and Sartre the East.* In more exalted terms, on the level of political philosophy, Sartre accused Camus of taking refuge in abstentionism: "You blame the European proletariat because it has not publicly stigmatised the Soviets, but you also blame the European governments because they allow Spain into UNESCO; in this case, I can see only one solution for you: the Galapagos Islands." Granted that the wish to keep the scales evenly balanced, to denounce with equal severity the injustices of which both sides are admittedly guilty, does not lead to any practical political action; but Camus is not a politician, nor is Sartre, and both can only act with their pens. What is Sartre's alternative to the Galapagos Islands after the end of the R.D.R.? "It seems to me on the other hand that the only way we can go to the help of the slaves over there is to take the side of the slaves in our own midst."

* On condition that he could go on living in the West.

This reasoning is precisely that of the reactionaries or pacifists in France between 1933 and 1939, who criticised the men of the Left for piling on the manifestos and public meetings in favour of the persecuted Jews. "Mind your own business", they said, "and keep your own house in order. The best way of helping the victims of the Third Reich is to look after the victims of the depression, of colonial exploitation and imperialism." In fact, this reasoning is false. Neither the Third Reich nor the Soviet Union is wholly indifferent to the opinion of the outside world. The protests of world Jewish organisations probably contributed to the relaxing of the anti-Zionist and anti-cosmopolitan campaign, under cover of which the Jews on the other side of the Iron Curtain were once more being persecuted. The propaganda unleashed in Europe and Asia against racial segregation in the United States helps those who are trying to improve the condition of the negroes and give them the equality of rights promised by the constitution.

But to return to the Sartre-Camus duel: why should a difference which is apparently one of nuance arouse so much passion? Sartre and Camus are neither Communists nor 'Atlanticists'; both of them recognise the existence of iniquities in either camp. Camus would denounce those of the East as well as those of the West; Sartre would denounce only those of the West, without denying the existence of the others. This may be merely a nuance, but it is one that calls a whole philosophy into question.

Camus is not opposed merely to this or that aspect of the Soviet system. He regards the Communist régime as a total tyranny, inspired and justified by a philosophy. He accuses the revolutionaries of repudiating all basic moral values which transcend the class struggle, he accuses them of sacrificing living men to an allegedly absolute good, a historical end the notion of which is contradictory and in any case incompatible with existentialism. That the one should not deny and that the other should denounce the concentration camps would scarcely matter were it not that the latter lends his denunciation the sense of a break with the revolutionary 'project' while the former refuses to break with a 'project' to which he does not strictly adhere.

In *L'Homme Révolté,* Camus analysed the ideological evolution from Hegel through Marx to Lenin and pointed out the disparity between certain predictions contained in Marx's works and the subsequent course of events. The analysis offered nothing one could not have found elsewhere, but it was on several points not easily contestable. Certainly Camus's book and even more his letter to the editor of *Les Temps Modernes* were vulnerable. In the book, the main lines of his argument lost themselves in a succession of loosely connected essays, while the style of the writing and the moralising tone militated against philosophic exactitude. The letter sought to confine the existentialists within too narrow a metaphysical strait-jacket (Sartre was given a nice opportunity of pointing out that Marxism is not exclusively confined to a prophetism and a methodology, but also comprises a philosophy). And yet, in spite of all, Camus threw out some decisive questions which Sartre and Jeanson found it difficult to answer.

"Do you, yes or no", he asked, "regard the Soviet regime as having accomplished the revolutionary 'project'?"

To which Francis Jeanson's reply was at once clear and somewhat tortuous: "It is not a subjective contradiction which prevents me from expressing myself categorically on the subject of Stalinism, but a factual difficulty which it seems to me possible to formulate thus: the Stalinist movement throughout

the world does not seem to us to be authentically revolutionary, but it is the only movement which claims to be revolutionary and it commands the allegiance, in this country in particular, of the vast majority of the proletariat; we are therefore at the same time *against* it inasmuch as we criticise its methods, and *for* it inasmuch as we do not know whether the true revolution may not be a pure figment, whether it may not in fact be necessary for the revolutionary enterprise to go through such phases before it is able to introduce a more humane social order, and whether the imperfections of this enterprise may not, in the present context, be preferable, all things considered, to its extermination pure and simple."

One cannot see that Camus ever expressed a wish for the 'extermination pure and simple' of the enterprise (supposing this formula to have any meaning). Be that as it may, M. Jeanson's avowal of ignorance is praiseworthy but surprising on the part of a philosopher of 'commitment'. Action in history demands that one should decide without knowing or, at least, that one should affirm by such a decision more than one knows. Every action, in the middle of the twentieth century, presupposes and involves the adoption of an attitude with regard to the Soviet enterprise. To evade this is to evade the implications and the constraints of historical existence, however much one may invoke History.

The sole justification, wrote Camus, for the seizure of power, for collectivisation, terror, and the total State built up in the name of the Revolution, would be the certainty that one was obeying necessity and hastening the realisation of the end of History. But existentialists could not possibly subscribe to this necessity or believe in the end of History. To which Sartre replied: "Has History a meaning, you ask, has it an end? For me, it is the question which has no meaning, for History, apart from the man who makes it, is no more than an abstract and immutable concept of which one cannot say either that it has or that it has not an end, and the problem is not to *know* its end, but to *give* it one. . . . We need not discuss whether or not there are values which transcend History, but simply observe that, if there are, they manifest themselves through human actions which are by definition historical. . . . And Marx never said that History would have an end. How could he have? One might just as well say that man will one day have no further purpose. He merely spoke of an end of prehistory, that is to say a goal which would eventually be attained within the context of History itself and overtaken, like all other goals."

This reply, as Sartre must have known better than anyone, falls somewhat short of the rules of honest argument. No-one would deny that our actions give meaning to History, but how can we choose this meaning if we are incapable of determining universal values or of understanding the whole? Any decision which is not based on eternal norms or on the totality of history must surely be arbitrary and must leave men and classes at war without our being able, even after the event, to choose between the two sides.

Hegel pointed to the parallelism beween the dialectic of concepts and the succession of empires and régimes; Marx offered the classless society as the solution to the enigma of History. Sartre cannot and will not take up, on the ontological plane, the notion of an end of History involving an 'absolute spirit', but he reintroduces its equivalent on the political plane. But if the socialist revolution is the end of pre-history, it must represent a radical departure from the past, must indicate a break in the passage of time, a real transformation of society.

Sartre claims to perceive in Marxism, apart from the prophetism and the methodology, certain truths which are strictly philosophical. These truths, which appear in the earlier writings of Marx, seem to me to be, essentially, the criticism of formal democracy, the analysis of 'alienation', and the affirmation of the urgency of destroying the capitalist order. To all intents and purposes, this philosophy subsumes the prophetism: the proletarian revolution will be essentially different from the revolutions of the past, for it alone will permit the humanisation of society. This subtle version of the Marxian prophetism has not, like the cruder version which counted on the expansion of monopoly and the pauperisation of the masses, been refuted by the events of the last century. But it remains abstract, formal, undefined. In what sense does the seizure of power by one party mark the end of prehistory?

Summed up in vulgar language, Camus's thought perhaps lacks novelty. On the points where it arouses the anger of *Les Temps Modernes,* it appears reasonable and rather commonplace. If revolt means pity and solidarity with the unfortunate, revolutionaries of the Stalinist type certainly deny the spirit of revolt. Convinced that they are obeying the laws of history and working for an end which is at once inevitable and beneficent, they become in their turn, and without any trace of guilt, tyrants and executioners.

These judgments do not suggest any precise rule of action, but the criticism of historical fanaticism should encourage us to choose in terms of extremely varied circumstances, according to probability and experience.

Scandinavian Socialism is not a universal model and does not claim to be. Concepts such as Revolution, the- vocation of the proletariat, the cure of 'alienations', suggest far bigger pretensions, but I fear that they are a great deal less helpful to us in orienting ourselves in the twentieth-century world.

Outside France and St. Germain-des-Prés, such a controversy as that between Sartre and Camus would be scarcely conceivable. Neither the intellectual nor the social conditions which make it possible in France exist in Great Britain or the United States, where the sociology or the economics of Marx are discussed without much passion, as one might discuss important works which represent new phases in the development of scientific knowledge, while his Hegelian philosophy is treated with indifference. Once one discards Hegelianism, the question of how far the Soviet Revolution conforms to *the* Revolution loses all significance. Certain revolutionaries, in the name of an ideology, have built up a certain régime. We know enough about this régime not to wish for its indefinite expansion. This does not mean that we desire its 'extermination pure and simple', nor that we oppose the proletariat or the revolt of the oppressed.

Allegiance to a real and therefore imperfect régime makes us collectively responsible for the injustices or cruelties from which no age and no country has ever been quite exempt. The true Communist is the man who accepts the whole of the Soviet system in the terms dictated by the Party. The true 'Westerner' is the man who accepts nothing unreservedly in our civilisation except the liberty it allows him to criticise it and the chance it offers him to improve it. The adherence of a part of the French working-class to the Communist Party profoundly affects the situation in which the French intellectuals must make this choice. Can the revolutionary prophetism proclaimed a century ago by a young philosopher in revolt against the torpid smugness of Germany and the horrors of the industrial revolution help us to understand the situation and choose sensibly? To dream of revolution is surely not so much a way of changing France as a way of deserting her.

Revolution in France?

Why do French intellectuals, whether Christians, Socialists, Gaullists, Communists or existentialists, vie with one another in talk of Revolution? Is it because, more sensitive than ordinary mortals to the vibrations of History, they can sense the coming of the millennium? Throughout the last decade

before the Second World War the question was constantly being aired; but it was immediately followed by a rider to the effect that the Hitlerite menace must prohibit Frenchmen, not from quarrelling among themselves—nothing and nobody could stop them doing that—but from settling their quarrels once and for all by violence. The Liberation was accompanied by a quasi-revolution, which both its supporters and its adversaries agree to have been abortive. In 1950, people were asking themselves once more whether France, with nearly fifty per cent of its electorate either Communist or Gaullist, in theory hostile to the régime, was on the eve of an explosion. A couple of years later, it seemed that conservatism had been restored and fortified rather than shaken by all the threats of violence and extremism.

The final result of the pseudo-revolutions which France experienced in 1940 and 1944 was a return to the men, the institutions and the practices of the Third Republic. The defeat of 1940 compelled Parliament to sign an act of abdication. A composite group, consisting of right-wing doctrinaires, a certain number of young activists, and a few Republican deserters, attempted to introduce an authoritarian, but not totalitarian, régime. This experiment was liquidated by the Liberation, which brought to power a new group, equally heterogeneous in its recruitment and its ideas. As against Vichy, this group claimed to be the true heir to Republican legality, sometimes associating itself with the last Government of the old régime, sometimes invoking the national will incarnate in the Resistance. Most often, however, it proclaimed itself revolutionary in its origins and its aims, basing its legality not on the vote but on a sort of mystic delegation of authority—one man symbolising the will of the people. In other words, it sought to *renew* the State and not merely to restore the Republic.

In the end, the Revolution was confined to the Purge, the so-called structural reforms (nationalisations) which were a hangover from the Popular Front, and certain laws such as those concerned with social security which were also an extension of earlier developments and involved no serious upheavals. In the matter of constitutional texts and practice, tradition or, more accurately, the old bad habits easily prevailed over the impulse towards renovation. The Parliament and the parties of the Fourth Republic showed themselves as jealous of their prerogatives, as hostile to a strong executive, as those of the Third. In 1946 the parties, in particular the 'big three'—Communists, Socialists and M.R.P.—were accused of 'monolithism'. In the succeeding year the Radicals and the Moderates took the field against them, profiting both from the continued popularity of General de Gaulle and the

unpopularity of the then Government caused by inflation and social discontent. Today, apart from the Communists, the parties are less monolithic than ever, and each one, when a vote is taken, finds itself divided against itself. 'Monolithism' was no more the real disease than the quarrels inside the parties are today.

By tradition, French parliamentary democracy is characterised by the weakness of the executive and the ability of the Assembly, not to 'get things done', but to keep governments as unstable and incohesive as possible. The defeat and the Liberation provided one opportunity to reverse this tradition. When General de Gaulle tried to create a second opportunity, he failed. What external events had made possible, French politics, restored to its former freedom, refused to tolerate.

One might argue that the failure of de Gaulle's *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* was mainly due to its own faulty tactics. If the 'Liberator' had remained in power in 1946 and led the movement against the first constitution, or again, if, some months after his resignation, he had joined in the battle on the eve of the first referendum, the victory which was won without him against the Socialist-Communist bloc would have been his. He would have been able to impose a different constitution from the one which was adopted at the second referendum. Perhaps in 1947-48, after the municipal elections, or again after the parliamentary elections of June 1951, he would have been able, had he consented to *les apparentements,* not, perhaps, to acquire unconditional authority but to form a cohesive government and introduce reforms. It required an abnormal degree of maladroitness to allow his movement to disintegrate as it did in 1952. Can it be that de Gaulle, in his heart of hearts, preferred an undoubted failure to a doubtful success? The limited power which would have been his would have allowed no more than disappointing half-measures: a flamboyant protest, without the test of responsibility, might leave more potent memories.

A basic misunderstanding compromised the movement from the very start. As soon as the fear of Communism had been dispelled, the majority of the Gaullist supporters, electors, and even deputies looked towards a Government similar to that of Raymond Poincaré. The leaders were more ambitious than the troops. They refused the compromises which the latter would have approved.

Whatever the accidents which contributed to the failure of the revolutions of 1940 and 1944 and to the defeat of de Gaulle's *Rassemblement,* the triumph of the conservative forces is easily explained. The post-war Frenchman was discontented, but he had no desire to go out and fight in the streets. The food shortage and inflation, together with the Communist menace, aggravated the discontent which was rife between 1946 and 1948. From 1949 onwards, the mass of the population wanted only to return to its accustomed way of life. The majority of the industrial workers are hostile to a régime which refuses them the living standards and the moral participation in the community which they justly claim; but their political consolidation, the adherence of the trade union leaders to the Communist Party, conduces to the maintenance of an atmosphere of class warfare rather than to a spontaneous uprising.

Revolutions are born of hope or despair rather than of dissatisfaction. The pressures to which post-war France has been subjected from the outside make a revolutionary outbreak even less probable. In the parliamentary game, the Right profits from the electoral strength of the Communist Party. If the latter were not subordinated to Moscow, if it co-operated sincerely with the Socialist Party, the Popular Front would blow up the conservative Republic, which owes it resurrection, by a conspicuous paradox, to its detested enemy.

Of the two alternatives between which the Left must choose —to wean the workers away from Communism or to bring about a common left-wing front (either 'national' or 'popular') between Communists and non-Communists— neither has much chance of materialising in the immediate future. The strength of the Communist Party is proportionate to the weakness of the Socialist Party. When the latter loses its dynamism and its working-class voters, the former succeeds in winning over an important fraction of the proletariat: the two phenomena are interdependent rather than the one cause and the other effect. How is the vicious circle to be broken? What spectacular reforms could detach the millions of left-wing voters from the party to which they have pinned their hopes?

Protected against a left-wing Revolution by the 'Stalinisation' of the working-class movement, protected by the weakness of the Socialist Party against any clamour for reforms, French conservatism has also been protected up to now against the consequences of its own errors by the solidarity of the Atlantic Powers. Between 1946 and 1949, American economic aid made it possible to avoid the draconian measures which would have been essential in

the absence of external assistance. France's integration in an international system, however necessary, has helped to stifle the will to reform.

In the eyes of many observers in 1946 (I myself was one of them) the parliamentary system, such as it was practised in France, seemed strangely ill-adapted to the Cold War, the internal Communist threat, and the demands of a modern economy. One forgot France's situation in the world. Once the Macedonian hegemony had been established, the Athenians no longer bothered to improve the institutions of the great city. As part of Alexander's empire and, later, of the Roman Empire, Athens was no longer politically alive.

The comparison is only partially valid. The United States has neither the talent nor the desire to organise a real hegemony. In Europe and in Africa France retains her own political responsibilities. In fact the accession to power of Mendès-France and his spectacular decisions in North Africa followed on the American refusal to assist the French in Indo-China. The defeat of Dien-Bien-Phu precipitated the parliamentary overthrow of the men responsible.

Between 1930 and 1939, how could one help but be enraged by the weakness and blindness of France's rulers? On the eve of the war, the level of industrial production was twenty per cent lower than in 1929, and the French army was left to face almost alone the might of Germany. In ten years, by an almost unbelievable series of errors, the country's rulers had provoked or connived at the decay of our economy and the disintegration of our system of alliances.

It is by no means certain that the foreign policy of the Fourth Republic has been superior to that of the Third. We sacrificed the best part of our armed forces in Indo-China, in an area where we no longer had any real interests or means of action, in a war which, for years, we knew we might lose but could not win. In Europe, up to 1950, our diplomacy was at pains to put a brake on the recovery of Western Germany, which was inevitable and foreseeable from the moment Russia undertook the Sovietisation of Eastern Europe, instead of taking advantage of the circumstances to bring about a reconciliation. With the Schumann Plan, our diplomacy jumped to the other extreme. There was the grandiose scheme for a West European Federation including Germany, Italy and Benelux. How was this to be accomplished without sacrificing the French Union?

However, the major decisions on which the choice between war and peace depends are no longer taken in the Quai d'Orsay. The eventual failure of our diplomacy would not have such disastrous consequences as twenty years ago. Before 1939, Frenchmen had a common grudge against their rulers since they all had the same precise objective: to avoid war without sacrificing independence. Today this minimum basis of agreement no longer exists. There is a large majority in favour of a vaguely united Europe. When it comes to a definite project—for example, the six-power federation of France, West Germany, Italy and Benelux—the French are divided as they are divided over the rearmament of the Federal Republic or the liberation of Eastern Europe or reform in North Africa. Frenchmen readily agree with one another in denouncing the Government's inability to work out a coherent policy. They deplore the absence of a common will, but do they, one wonders, genuinely want it?

On the domestic front, the first decade of the Fourth Republic has been an improvement on the last decade of the Third. Old-fashioned liberals, pointing to the deterioration of the currency and the expansion of bureaucracy, will be shocked by this verdict. Nevertheless, economic expansion even if it involves inflation is preferable to stagnation even if accompanied by a sound currency. Moreover, the deflation between 1931 and 1936, which was the inevitable result of the effort to maintain the rate of exchange of the franc, paved the way for the social troubles of 1936 and the economic errors of the Popular Front.

Whether in agriculture, industrial production, or social legislation, the country is less hidebound than it was. It cannot be said that the Malthusianism of the industrialists has been finally eliminated, or that the peasants have all recognised the necessity of modernising their farming methods. Conservative restrictive practices—the protection of vested interests, the obstruction of liberal or administrative measures to procure the reconversion of marginal enterprises —are still rife. But in spite of everything, the defeat and the occupation and the quasi-revolution of 1944 have shaken things up and made Frenchmen more amenable to change, more prepared to take risks.

But if the nation is more alive, the political system has not improved. Governments are even weaker and more divided than they were during the last years of the Third Republic. Unless one considered total inertia as the supreme virtue of a State, one could not possibly approve of the Fourth

Republic. It would be wrong to accuse the intellectuals of being the only dissidents; the average Frenchman has little more loyalty or civic sense. A stagnant society and an ideologically-minded intelligentsia—the two phenomena may seem contradictory but are in fact inseparable. The less attractive the reality, the more the intellectual dreams of revolution. The more hidebound the reality, the more the intellectual will regard criticism and opposition as his legitimate mission.

The forces of regeneration which are ripening under the crust of conservatism, the increase in the birth-rate, the modernisation of industry and agriculture, open up a prospect for the future. The intellectuals would make their peace with the nation if and when it became more worthy of their ideal picture of it. If this reconciliation fails to materialise or takes too long to do so, the explosion which the revolutionaries profess to want, which the political parties deeply fear but do all in their power to provoke, the explosion which would rip off the bandages that conceal the nation's sores, remains improbable but still possible. But there is a sort of unwritten law of the Republic, according to which the Assembly places its powers in the hands of a single man whenever the crisis becomes so grave that it threatens the regime itself and the parliamentary game. This law, which allowed the Third Republic to last for so long, seems to have been handed on to the Fourth. Thus the defeat in Indo-China opened the way for Mendès-France.

The French are not wretched enough to revolt against their lot. The national decline appears to them to be less attributable to men than to events. Incapable of uniting for a common future, they lack the hope which arouses the masses. They have never had the wisdom to dispense with ideals. The tasks of the nation do not inspire them unless they are transfigured by some ideology. And they are torn apart by conflicting ideologies. That they live together at all is due to the fact that their discordant passions are tempered by scepticism. And scepticism cannot be revolutionary, even though it speaks the language of revolution.

The concept of Revolution will not fall into disuse any more than the concept of the Left. It, too, expresses a nostalgia, which will last as long as societies remain imperfect and men eager to reform them. Not that the wish for social progress must lead logically or inevitably to the will to revolution. A certain degree of optimism and impatience is also needed. There are some who are revolutionaries out of hatred of the world or a perverse love of disaster; more often, revolutionaries are guilty of excessive optimism. Every

known regime is blameworthy if one relates it to an abstract ideal of equality or liberty. Only revolution, because it is an adventure, or a revolutionary régime, because it accepts the permanent use of violence, seems capable of attaining the goal of perfection. The myth of the Revolution serves as a refuge for Utopian intellectuals; it becomes the mysterious, unpredictable intercessor between the real and the ideal.

Violence itself attracts and fascinates more than it repels. Socialism on the English model or the 'classless Scandinavian society' have never enjoyed the same prestige among the continental, especially French, left-wingers as has the Russian Revolution—despite the civil war, the horrors of collectivisaation, and the great purges. Or should one say because of? For it sometimes seems as if the price of the Revolution were placed on the credit rather than on the debit side of the balance sheet.

No one, as Herodotus says, is insane enough to prefer war to peace. The observation should also be applicable to civil wars. And yet, although the romance of war was buried in the mud of Flanders, the romance of civil war has managed to survive the dungeons of the Lubianka. There are times when one wonders whether the myth of the Revolution is not indistinguishable from the Fascist cult of violence. At the end of Sartre's play, *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu,* Goetz cries: "The reign of man has come at last. And a good beginning, too! Come on, Nasty, let's do some killing. . . . We've got this war to fight and I'll fight it."

Must the reign of men be the reign of war?

CHAPTER III

THE MYTH OF THE PROLETARIAT

IN Marxist eschatology, the proletariat is cast in the role of collective saviour. The expressions used by the young Marx leave one in no doubt as to the Judaeo-Christian origins of the myth of the class elected through suffering for the redemption of humanity. The mission of the proletariat, the end of prehistory thanks to the Revolution, the reign of liberty—it is easy to recognise the source of these ideas: the Messiah, the break with the past, the Kingdom of God.

Such comparisons are by no means damaging to Marxism. The resurrection, in a seemingly scientific form, of age-old beliefs has a natural appeal for minds weaned on faith. The religious legend could as well be taken for a prefigurement of the truth as the modern idea a relic of old superstititions.

The exaltation of the proletariat as such is not a universal phenomenon. One might almost regard it as a sign of French provincialism. In the country where the 'new Faith' already reigns, it is the Party rather than the proletariat which is the object of a cult. Wherever democratic socialism has been successful, the factory workers, having become petty bourgeois, no longer interest the intellectuals and are themselves no longer interested in ideologies. The improvement of their lot has both deprived them of the prestige of misfortune and withdrawn them from the temptation to violence.

Does this mean that ratiocination about the proletariat and its function is now restricted to those Western countries which are torn between the fascination of the Soviet régime and attachment to democratic liberties? The subtle arguments about the proletariat and the Party which are given free reign in the columns of *Les Temps Modernes* and *Esprit* recall those which used to be carried on half a century ago by left-wing theorists in Russia and in Germany. In Russia, the argument has been settled once and for all from above; in Germany, it has run dry through lack of contestants. But between the countries which have been converted to Communism and the Western countries where the expansion of production has transformed the outcasts of the earth into members of moderate trade unions, there remains more than

half the human race which envies the standard of living of the latter and turns its eyes hopefully towards the former.

The Proletariat Defined

The definition of the term 'class', which is perhaps more widely used than any other concept in the current language of politics, is a source of passionate argument. I have no intention here of joining in the discussion, which in a sense is incapable of conclusion. There is nothing to prove the existence of a single predefined reality which can be christened class; and in any case the discussion is all the more pointless in that everyone knows which category of men in a modern society are universally known as proletarians: those wage-earners who work with their hands in factories.

Why is it so often considered difficult to define the working class? No definition can trace precisely the limits of a category. At what stage in the hierarchy does the skilled worker cease to belong to the proletariat? Is the manual worker in the public services a proletarian even though he receives his wages from the State and not from a private employer? Do the wage-earners in commerce, whose hands manipulate the objects manufactured by others, belong to the same group as the wage-earners in industry? There can be no dogmatic answer to such queries: they have no common criterion. According to whether one considers the nature of the work, the method and the amount of the remuneration, the style of life, one will or will not include certain workers in the category of proletarians. The garage mechanic, a wage-earning manual worker, is in a different position and has a different outlook on society from the worker employed on an assembly-line in a motor-car factory. There is no such thing as a quintessence of the proletariat to which certain wage-earners belong; there is merely a category whose centre is clearly defined and its periphery vague.

This problem of definition would not in itself have aroused such passionate controversy. The Marxist doctrine ascribed to the proletariat a unique mission, some say 'to change history', others 'to achieve humanity'. How can the millions of factory workers, dispersed among thousands of enterprises, be the instruments of such an undertaking? Which raises another problem—that of establishing, not the limits of the proletariat, but the characteristics which make it a unity.

It is easy to recognise certain common traits, material and psychological, among the manual workers in industry: the size of their incomes, the distribution of their expenditure, their way of life, their attitude towards their jobs or their employers, their beliefs and values, etc. This community, objectively distinguishable, is only partial. French proletarians differ in many respects from English proletarians and resemble their own compatriots. Proletarians who live in villages or small towns have perhaps more in common with their non-proletarian neighbours than with workers in big industrial towns. In other words, the homogeneity of the proletarian category is quite obviously incomplete even though it may be more marked than that of other categories.

These observations are fairly self-evident, but they explain why there is an inevitable disparity between the proletariat as the sociologist knows and studies it and the proletariat whose mission it is to 'change history'. To get over this difficulty, our contemporary left-wing apologists fall back on the Marxian formula: "The proletariat must be revolutionary or it will not exist at all."

"The worker becomes a proletarian by revolting against his alienation," says Francis Jeanson. "The unity of the proletariat consists in its relationship with the other classes of society—in other words, its struggle against society," says Sartre. As soon as it is defined as a general will, the proletariat acquires a subjective unity. The size of the proletariat in terms of flesh-and-blood workers who share this general will matters little; the militant minority is the legitimate embodiment of the entire proletariat.

The use which Toynbee makes of the word has produced new ambiguities. The industrial worker is only one example among many of those members of the human race, especially numerous during periods when civilisations are in process of breaking up, who feel themselves alienated from the existing culture, who rebel against the established order and who are susceptible to the voice of the prophet. In the ancient world it was the slaves and deportees who listened to the word of the Apostles; among the workers of the industrial cities, Marxist preaching has won millions of adherents. The 'non-integrated' are proletarians, as are the semi-barbaric peoples situated on the periphery of civilisations. It might also be said that the deportees of today, the inmates of concentration camps, the national minorities, are more authentically proletarian than the industrial workers.

However, Sartre's definition leads us to the essential point. Why has the proletariat a unique mission in history? The election of the proletariat was expressed in the writings of the young Marx by the famous formula: "a class with radical chains, a class in bourgeois society which is not a class of bourgeois society, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal. . . ." The dehumanisation of the proletarians, their exclusion from all social life, makes them men pure and simple and by virtue of this universal.

This same idea is taken up under an infinite variety of forms by the existentialist philosophers, in particular by M. Merleau-Ponty: "If Marxism gives a privileged position to the proletariat, it is because, through the inherent logic of their condition, through their most instinctive ways of life, regardless of all messianic illusions, the proletarians who 'are not gods' are, and are alone, in a position to realise humanity. . . . The proletariat, if we consider its role in the given historical constellation, proceeds towards a mutual recognition of man and man. . . ."* "The condition of the proletarian is such that he is cut off from all particularity, not by thought and a process of abstraction, but in reality, and through the very substance of his life. He alone *is* the universality he thinks, he alone achieves the self-awareness adumbrated in the speculations of the philosophers."*

* *Humanisme et Terreur* (Paris, 1947), p. 120.

The contempt with which the intellectuals are inclined to regard everything connected with commerce and industry has always seemed to me itself contemptible. That the same people who look down on engineers or industrialists profess to recognise universal man in the worker at his lathe or on the assembly line, seems to me endearing but somewhat surprising. Neither the division of labour nor the raising of the standard of living contributes towards this universalisation.

One can conceive how the proletarians observed by Marx, men who worked twelve hours a day, who were protected neither by trade unions nor by social legislation, who were subject to the iron law of wages, may have appeared 'departicularised' by misfortune. Such is not the case with the worker in Detroit, Coventry, Stockholm, Billancourt, or the Ruhr (or even Moscow), who is not at all like a universal man but like a citizen of one nation or the member of one party. Philosophers have the right to hope that the proletarian will not become integrated with the existing order but that he

will preserve himself for revolutionary action: but they cannot, in the mid-twentieth century, represent as a fact the universality of the industrial worker. In what sense can the French proletariat, split up among various rival organisations, be called 'the only authentic intersubjectivity'?

The subsequent stage in the reasoning, which tends to confirm the Marxist eschatology, is no more convincing. Why *must* the proletariat be revolutionary? If one allows a fairly loose interpretation of the word revolutionary, one will admit that the workers of Manchester in 1850, like those of Calcutta today, react to their condition by a kind of revolt. They are conscious of being victims of an unjust organisation. Not all proletarians have the feeling of being exploited or oppressed. Extreme poverty or inherited resignation can deaden this feeling, the raising of the standard of living and the humanisation of industrial relationships assuage it. Probably it will never entirely disappear, even under the obsessional propaganda of the Communist State, so much is it part and parcel of the wage-earner's condition and of the structure of modern industry.

* *Ibid.,* p. 124.

However this may be, there is no conclusive evidence that the proletariat as such is spontaneously revolutionary. Lenin was clear-sighted enough to realise the workers' indifference to their vocation, their desire for reforms here and now. Indeed, the theory of the Party as the vanguard of the proletariat was born of the necessity, recognised by the revolutionary leaders, to give a lead to the masses, who aspire to a better lot but are averse to apocalytic visions.

In the Marxism of the young Marx, the revolutionary vocation of the proletariat derives from the requirements of the dialectic. The proletarian is the slave who will overthrow his master, not for himself but for everyone. He is the living proof of inhumanity who will inaugurate the reign of humanity. Marx spent the rest of his life seeking confirmation, through economic and social analysis, for the truth of this dialectic.

Orthodox Communism also finds no difficulty in postulating the revolutionary vocation of the proletariat. This is implied in the global interpretation of history which Communism regards as incontestable. The emphasis is, of course, transferred to the Party, and neither the existence nor the revolutionary will of the latter is open to doubt. At the beginning, the aspiring Communist gives his allegiance to the Party because the Party represents the class which has been elected to the role of collective saviour.

Once inside the Party, he is liable to lose interest in the class, especially in view of the fact that the comrades come from all classes.

This same does not apply to our contemporary French philosophers, who regard themselves as revolutionaries, refuse to join the Communist Party and yet insist that one cannot "fight the working class without becoming the enemy of mankind and of oneself".* The industrial worker in the mid-twentieth century is no longer mankind reduced to the naked substance of the human condition, the distillation of all classes and all particularities. How do these thinkers justify the mission with which they entrust him?

* J. P. Sartre in *Les Temps Modernes* (July, 1952), p. 5.

Stripped of the complications of language, the burden of their argument seems to be more or less as follows. The industrial worker cannot be aware of his situation without rising in revolt; revolt is the only human reaction to the recognition of an inhuman condition. The worker does not separate his lot from that of others; he sees, with justification, that his misfortune is collective, not individual, that it is part and parcel of the structure of the institutions not of the intentions of the capitalists. The proletarian revolt therefore tends to organise itself, to become revolutionary under the leadership of a party. The proletariat sets itself up as a class only to the extent that it acquires a unity and this can only result from opposition to the other classes. In short, the proletariat is *its* struggle against society.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in his more recent writings, proceeds from this authentically Marxian idea that the proletariat only becomes united through opposition to the other classes, and concludes that an organisation, that is a party, is essential. Implicitly, or surreptitiously, he identifies the proletarian party with the Communist Patty, in such a way that he turns to the latter's advantage the arguments which merely demonstrate the need for *a* party to defend the interests of the workers. Moreover, it is impossible to say whether the argument holds for the French proletariat of 1955, the French proletariat over the past two centuries, or for all proletariats inside capitalist régimes.

To return to more prosaic considerations: if one agrees to call all industrial workers proletarians, what are the aspects of their condition against which they rebel? What aspects would a revolution suppress? In concrete terms, what would the triumph of a 'deproletarianised' working class involve? In what way would the victorious workers, no longer 'alienated', differ from those of today?

Real and Ideal Emancipation

The proletarian, we are told by Marx and the writers who echo him, is 'alienated'. He possesses nothing but his labour-power which he sells in the market to the owner of the instruments of production. He is enclosed in the narrow confines of his job and receives, as the price of his labours, a wage which is just sufficient to maintain himself and his family. According to this theory, private ownership of the means of production *is* the ultimate cause both of oppression and exploitation. Deprived of the surplus-value which is accumulated by the capitalists alone, the worker is stripped, so to speak, of his humanity.

These ideas remain in the background of Marxist thought. It is not easy to put them very explicitly. The key to the argument, in *Das Kapital,* is the conception according to which the worker's wage, like any commodity, has a value which is determined by the needs of the worker and his family. Now, either this conception is interpreted in the strictest sense, in which case it is undeniably confuted by the raising of salaries in the West: or it is interpreted in the widest sense—the incompressible needs of the workers evolve from the collective psychology—and in this case the conception itself no longer tells us anything. In the middle of the twentieth century the worker's wage in the United States can allow the purchase of a washing machine or a television set.

Das Kapital has been little read in France, and French writers seldom refer to it. But it is not so much ignorance of the economic theorems of Marx which weakens the analysis of working-class alienation as the realisation that many of the workers' grievances have nothing to do with the pattern of ownership, that they subsist just the same when the means of production belong to the State.

Let us enumerate the basic grievances: (1) inadequate pay; (2) excessive working hours; (3) the threat of unemployment; (4) discontent arising from the technical and administrative organisation of the factory; (5) the feeling of being in a rut with no possibility of advancement; (6) the consciousness of being the victim of a basic injustice, in that the system either does not allow the worker a fair share of the national wealth or refuses him any part in the management of the economy.

Marxist propaganda is at pains to foster the awareness of a basic injustice and to confirm it by the theory of exploitation. Such propaganda does not succeed in every country. In countries where the immediate claims of the

workers are to some extent satisfied, the indictment of the régime takes on the appearance of a sterile radicalism. On the other hand, in countries where these claims are not satisfied, or are satisfied too slowly, the temptation to blame the régime is liable to become irresistible.

The Marxist interpretation of proletarian misery cannot but appear convincing to the proletarian. The cruelties and hardships arising from the wage system, from poverty, technology, the threat of unemployment, the lack of future—why not put it all down to capitalism since this vague word covers both the 'relations of production' and the method of distribution? Even in the countries where working conditions have been most improved, in the United States where private enterprise is in general accepted, there is still a prejudice against profit-making, a latent suspicion, always ready to spring to the surface, that the capitalist or the limited company, as such, exploit their workers. The Marxist interpretation accords with the outlook on society to which the workers spontaneously subscribe.

In fact, the level of salaries in the West depends, one knows, on productivity, on the division of the national income between investments, military expenditure and consumption, and the distribution of incomes among the various classes. This distribution is no more egalitarian in a régime such as that of Soviet Russia than in a capitalist or semi-capitalist régime. The proportion taken up by investments is greater on the other side of the Iron Curtain; there, economic expansion has contributed to the growth of power rather than to the raising of the standard of living. There is no proof that collective ownership is more conducive to increased productivity than private ownership.

A diminution in working hours has proved itself compatible with capitalism. On the other hand, the threat of unemployment remains one of the evils of any economic system which is based on the free market. Unless one eliminates the fluctuations of the trade cycle or accepts permanent inflation, any economy based on the free hire of labour involves a risk of at least temporary unemployment. There is no point in denying this drawback; its effects must be reduced as far as possible.

As regards the psychological problems of factory work, industrial psychologists have analysed their various causes and effects and suggested methods likely to alleviate fatigue or boredom, to smooth over personal relations and to cure grievances and recriminations, and to integrate the workers into the communal life of the workshop or factory. The application

of such methods is not the exclusive property of any one political system, whether capitalist or socialist. The weakness of private ownership in this respect is that the challenging of the capitalist system as such incites many workers and intellectuals to denounce the application of scientific teachings for socially conservative ends.

Has the character of the régime any bearing on the workers' chances of promotion? This is not an easy question; comparative studies of mobility are too imperfect to allow a categorical answer. In a general sense, advancement becomes easier as the proportion of non-manual jobs increases. Economic growth is in itself a factor tending towards mobility. The disappearance of caste prejudices in bourgeois democratic countries should accelerate this process. In the Soviet Union, the liquidation of the old aristocracy and the rapidity of industrialisation have greatly increased the chances of promotion.

Finally, there remains the fact that if capitalism, defined as the private ownership of the means of production and the mechanism of the market, is the source of all evil, all reforms should be condemned because they threaten to prolong the life of an odious system.

On the basis of these summary and fairly obvious remarks, there is no difficulty in distinguishing two forms of working class emancipation. The first, which is never finally completed, consists of a multiplicity of partial and *ad hoc* measures: the remuneration of the workers rises as productivity rises, social legislation protects families and the old, trade unions freely discuss conditions of work with the employers, and the extension of education increases the chances of promotion. This form of emancipation can be called *real* emancipation: it is characterised by concrete improvements in the condition of the proletariat, it leaves certain grievances, especially unemployment, and it cannot entirely eliminate opposition on the part of a minority, big or small, to the principles of the régime itself.

A revolution on the Soviet model gives absolute power to the minority which claims to represent the proletariat and transforms many workers or sons of workers into engineers or commissars. Does this mean that the proletariat itself, that is to say the millions who work with their hands in factories, is 'emancipated'?

The standard of living has not suddenly leapt up in the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe; rather has it diminished, since the new ruling classes probably do not consume any less of the national wealth than

the old. Where there existed free trade unions, there are now only bodies which are subject to the State and whose function is to incite to effort, not to fight for the workers' rights. The risk of unemployment has disappeared, but so have the free choice of job or of place of work and the free election of union leaders and governments. The proletariat is no longer alienated, because it is theoretically the ultimate owner of the means of production and even of the State. But it has not been freed from the risk of deportation, or from the tyranny of the labour permit, or from the authority of the managers.

Does this mean that the second form of emancipation, which one might call *ideal* emancipation, is illusory? Do not let us be carried away by polemics. We have seen that the proletariat is inclined to interpret society as a whole according to the ideas of Marxist philosophy: it believes itself to be the victim of the boss, when in fact it is mainly the victim of low productivity. But however erroneous this judgment may be, it is none-the-less authentic. With the suppression of the capitalists and their replacement by State managers, with the inauguration of a plan, everything becomes clear. Inequalities of pay are accepted as the natural consequence of the varying importance of different functions, decline in consumption as the inevitable accompaniment of increased investment. The proletariat, at least a fair proportion of it, finds it easier to accept the Zis of the manager appointed by the State than the Packard of the private boss. It does not protest against privations because it is persuaded of their necessity for the future. Those who believe in the ultimate achievement of the classless society, however far ahead, will feel themselves to be associated, through their very sacrifices, with a great and noble task.

This *ideal* emancipation the Marxists would call *real* because it is defined by an ideology: private ownership is the source of all alienation and the wage-earner, instead of being 'particularised' by working in the service of an entrepreneur, becomes 'universalised', under a Soviet-type régime, through his participation in the community, and free since he submits himself freely to the necessity represented by the industrialisation plans which accord with the demands of a history determined by inflexible laws.

Whoever denounces capitalism, by definition prefers planning with its political severities to the mechanism of the market with its unpredictable fluctuations. The Soviet régime places itself in the context of history. It wants to be judged not so much on what it is as on what it will be. The continued low standard of living throughout the first Five-Year Plans is

justified not by dogma but by the necessity of building up the military and economic strength of the Soviet Union, threatened from the outside. The 'ideal' emancipation, once the Socialist State is securely established, will approximate more and more to the 'real' emancipation.

None of the theorists of Bolshevism had foreseen, before the seizure of power, that the trade unions would be *gleich-geschaltet* by the Socialist State. Lenin was alone in realising that there was a danger of the so-called proletarian State repeating the misdeeds of the bourgeois State and he had pleaded in advance the cause of independent trade unionism. The dislocation of the economy after the civil war and the militaristic methods adopted by Trotsky and the Bolsheviks in order to fight their enemies caused them to forget their former liberal ideas.

Of course it is said today that strikes and opposition and wage demands no longer have any sense since the State is proletarian. Criticism of bureaucracy remains legitimate and necessary. Privately, according to the esoteric doctrine, the extension of the right to criticise is envisaged when the process of building up the Socialist State has reached such a stage as to allow a relaxation of discipline. Once the régime is no longer questioned, the unions, like those of Britain or America, would defend the interests of the workers against the exactions of the managers. The function of protecting the workers' rights would gradually be added to the function of organising the workers, as in every other industrial society.

Even if one accepts the validity of this long-term optimism, why should the Western countries which went through the development phase corresponding to the first Five-Year Plans a century ago, sacrifice 'real' to 'ideal' emancipation? In countries where the capitalist or semi-capitalist regime is weak, the same argument will be invoked as in the underdeveloped regions: only the unconditional authority of a homogeneous group which has become the master of the State can break down the resistance of the reactionaries or the big landowners and impose a collective economy. In countries where the economy continues to expand, where the standard of living has risen, why should the real liberties of the proletariat, however partial, be sacrified to a total liberation which turns out to be indistinguishable from the omnipotence of the State? Perhaps, in the latter case, workers who have not experienced syndicalism or Western socialism are given a sensation of progress. In the eyes of the East German or Czech workers, who have known real liberties, 'ideal' emancipation is nothing but a hoax.

The Attraction of Ideal Emancipation

When the majority of the proletariat is led by men who are dedicated to real emancipation, left-wing intellectuals need have no pangs of conscience. Perhaps they are unconsciously disillusioned by the attitude of the workers, who are more susceptible to immediate gains than to grandiose visions. Artists and writers have seldom been inspired by the British Labour movement or by Swedish syndicalism, and they are certainly right not to waste their time studying achievements which, however admirable, are not worthy of the consideration of superior minds. In Great Britain, the leaders of the Labour movement who are of working-class origin usually show more moderation than those who have graduated from the intellectual professions. Aneurin Bevan is an obvious exception, and it is not surprising that he is surrounded by intellectuals and that the trade union leaders are among his principal adversaries.

In France it is quite otherwise. There, an important part of the working class votes for the Communist Party, the leaders of the most influential trade unions are Party members, and reformism is regarded as sterile. This is the source of the contradiction which at once torments and fascinates existentialists, left-wing Christians and 'progressives' of every sort: how can they bring themselves to break away completely from the party which represents the proletariat, and how can they give their allegiance to a party which is more interested in serving the interests of the Soviet Union than those of the French working class?

Put in rational terms, the problem allows of a variety of solutions. If one considers that the Soviet Union, in spite of everything, represents the cause of the proletariat, one joins the Communist Party or co-operates with it. If, on the other hand, one considers that 'real' emancipation has a better chance of success in the West or that, coexistence being the only means of ensuring peace, France must remain, as she is geographically, on the side of the bourgeois democracies, one tries to wean the unions away from the control of those who have quite sincerely put themselves in the service of Moscow. Finally, one can look for a middle way—socialism at home, neutrality abroad, but without a break with the West. None of these decisions should demand metaphysical ratiocination; none need transform the intellectual into an enemy of the proletariat—on one condition: that the decision is made in the light of historical reality and not on the basis of the Marxian prophetism. Unfortunately, both existentialists and 'progressive' Christians refuse to see reality except through this messianic spectroscope.

The wish for solidarity with the proletariat is proof of generous feelings, but it scarcely helps one to orientate oneself in the world. In the mid-twentieth century, there is no such thing as a world proletariat. If one supports the party of the Russian proletariat, one is against that of the American proletariat, unless one regards the few thousand Communists, the Negro or Mexican sub-proletariats, as the representatives of the American working class. If one supports the Communist-dominated French trade unions, one is against the German trade unions which are almost unanimously anti-Communist. If one bases oneself on the votes of the majority, one would have had to be Socialist in France in the 'thirties and Communist in the 'fifties, one would be a Labour supporter in England and a Communist supporter in France.

The millions of manual labourers do not spontaneously share a united opinion or a united will. According to country or circumstance, they incline towards violence or towards resignation. *The* authentic proletariat is not defined by the actual experience of the industrial workers, but by a theory of history.

How is it that philosophers, who claim to be interested in the concrete, can reaffirm, in the middle of the twentieth century and after two World Wars, the Marxian prophetism concerning the proletariat—especially in a country like France which has more peasants and petty bourgeois than proletarians? Sartre's itinerary towards quasi-Communism appears to be dialectical. Man being a 'vain passion', one is inclined in the last analysis to judge the various 'projects' as all equally sterile. The radiant vision of the classless society follows on the description of the squalid society of today, just as, in the novels of the naturalist school, political optimism was cheerfully combined with the depiction of human baseness—the little blue flower of the future on the dunghill of the present.

The existentialist technique of psychology, like the Marxist criticism of ideologies, undermines doctrines by unmasking the sordid interests concealed behind the façade of verbal generosity. There is a risk that this method may lead to a sort of nihilism: why should our own convictions be any purer than those of others? The recourse to an arbitrary decision of the will, either individual or collective, in the Fascist style, offers one way out of this universal negation; the 'lived intersubjectivity' of the proletariat or the law of history offers another.

Finally, in the last resort, the philosophy of the existentialists is morally inspired. Sartre is obsessed by the desire for authenticity, for communication, for freedom. For him, any situation which inhibits the exercise of freedom is contrary to man's predestined purpose. The subordination of one individual to another falsifies the dialogue between minds and consciences which are equal because equally free. Ethical radicalism, combined with ignorance of social structures, predisposed him to verbal revolutionism. Hatred of the bourgeoisie makes him allergic to prosaic reforms: the proletariat must not be allowed to compromise with the 'swine' who are confident of the strength of their vested interests. Thus we have the strange spectacle of a philosopher and a sceptic reintroducing the myth of the vocation of the working class, without apparently being aware of any contradiction in his attitude.

The case of the 'progressive' Christians is different and their moral conflict is often a moving one. It is difficult for a non-Catholic to broach this subject without being accused of hypocrisy or bigotry. The measures taken against the worker-priests had a profound effect on many Christians; they were also exploited by men who were quite indifferent to religion and who seized the opportunity of discrediting the Church and at the same time boosting the cause of fellow-travelling by quoting men whose political acumen, if not their spiritual quality, was open to doubt.

The primary fact which must be taken into account in order to understand the attitude of the 'progressive' Christians is the bond between a large number of French proletarians and the Communist Party. Thus, the author of *Jeunesse de l'Eglise* writes: "There could be no hope of the influence of the Church being usefully exercised for the general good if our view of the working-class world where it must be made to take root remained abstract and distorted, however convenient it might seem. We must, therefore, however much it may cost us, face up to the bitter reality: that is to say we must acknowledge as a fact the *organic connection* between Communism and the working class as a whole."*

But why this organic connection? The author of the book does not invoke historical explanations—the merger of the unions at the time of the Popular Front, the Resistance, Communist infiltration at the time of the Liberation—he gives reasons which, if literally interpreted, would apply everywhere and always. The Communist Party "has discovered as it were scientifically the causes of the oppression which weighs upon the working class"; and it has organised this class which would otherwise be prone to spontaneous violence "for an action whose final success, however distant, is more important than

immediate and partial results"; and finally it has given the working-class population "a philosophy which Jean Lacroix has described in a penetrating phrase as the immanent philosophy of the proletariat".

* *Les Evénements et la Foi, 1940-1952* (Paris, Editions du Seuil. 1951).

"What we seek", this writer tells us, "what we seek passionately, for if we do not find it we will sink into despair, is a new and healthy historical force, preserved from all the squalid double-dealing of the past and capable of accomplishing what the others have been content to think about and make use of for their own ends. And this force *does* exist: we have come across its solid, palpable form and recognised its potentialities the closer events have brought us to the people. The only modern world which is worthy of our hopes is the working-class world. . . . No, the workers are not supermen or saints; and they sometimes appear pretty weak in face of the infamies which are offered to them by the great as examples of virtue. And yet, in spite of all that, they bear within them the youth of the new world—new in relation to the one which is disintegrating before our eyes—which over centuries of time, across all the barriers of space, may be reunited with the civilisations in which money, capital, had not yet monopolised and perverted everything."

The working-class population carries within it the youth of the world, the Communist Party is organically linked with it, but "there is no possibility of working-class advancement except in accordance with the plans and the means suggested to the workers by the conditions of existence and of struggle which are theirs, which belong to them". From which the writer has no hesitation in concluding: "The working class will return to Christianity, we firmly hope and believe, but probably only after it has, by the strength of its own hands and guided by the immanent philosophy which it carries within itself, conquered humanity."

It is essential to point out the strictly *intellectual* errors which are manifest in these texts, errors which are not those of one or two individuals but which have achieved a wide currency in certain circles. To accept Marxism, as propagated by the Communists, as the scientific explanation of working-class misery is tantamount to confusing the physics of Aristotle with those of Einstein or Darwin's *Origin of Species* with modern biology. The Marxism of the Stalinists, which the left-wing Christians naïvely adopt, attributes to the politico-economic system as such—the pattern of ownership or the

mechanism of the market—the responsibility for oppression and poverty. This so-called science is in fact no more than an ideology.

Nor can Marxism be called "the immanent philosophy of the proletariat". Industrial workers may perhaps have a tendency to see society as a whole dominated and exploited by the owners of the means of production. Condemnation of private ownership, indiscriminate abuse of capitalism as the cause of poverty and all other evils—the workers are sometimes inclined to such hasty and over-simplified judgments, which are encouraged by Communist propaganda. But the affirmation that revolution alone will bring about the liberation of the working class does not in the least express the immanent thought of the proletariat; it belongs to the doctrine which the Communists never entirely succeed in drumming into their proletarian followers.

Far from being the science of working-class misfortune, Marxism is an intellectualist philosophy which has seduced certain groups of the proletariat; far from being the immanent philosophy of the proletariat, Communism merely makes use of this pseudo-science in order to attain its own end, the seizure of power. The workers do not themselves believe that they have been chosen for the salvation of humanity. On the contrary, they hanker after the condition of the bourgeoisie.

From these two errors there ensues a third which concerns the class war and the advent of a new world. There is no point in arguing about the virtues which the left-wing Christian attributes to the working class: one must confess one's ignorance. When we read that "the working class is an honest, downright race; it was through love of liberty that it divorced itself, consciously or unconsciously, not so much from the Church as from the artificial structures and false pretences in which the bourgeoisie had surrounded the Church", when we read that "most men and women of the people . . . are faithful to the Sermon on the Mount",* we are tempted neither to dissent—the goodness of simple people is no mere figment—nor to applaud—the myth of the chosen class is so obviously mixed up with the description.

A Catholic has the right to believe that collective ownership or a planned society is more conducive to the good of the greatest number than a so-called capitalist regime. That is an opinion on a secular matter that one can affirm or reject. He has the right to believe that history must evolve towards the system he prefers, and to acknowledge as a fact the struggle among the social classes

for the division of the national income or the organisation of society. But if he calls the advent of socialism 'the meaning of history', if he transfigures the power of the Communist Party into working-class emancipation, if he confers a spiritual validity on the class struggle, then he has become a Marxist and is struggling in vain to reconcile a Christian heresy with orthodox Catholicism.

What the Christian, without being aware of it, is taken in by in the working-class world and in Marxist ideology are the reminders, the echoes, of a religious experience: proletarians and party militants, like the early Christians, live in anticipation of a new world; they have remained pure, open to charity, because they have never exploited their fellowmen; the class which carries within it the youth of humanity rises up against the corrupt past. Subjectively, the left-wing Christians remain Catholics, but they have shelved the religious factor until beyond the revolution. "We are not afraid; we are sure of our faith, sure of our Church. And moreover we know that the latter has never for long opposed any real human progress. . . . If a worker came to us one day to talk about religion, or even to solicit Baptism, we should begin, I think, by asking him if he had thought about the causes of working-class misery and if he took part in the struggle carried on by his comrades for the good of all."* This is the final step: evangelisation is subordinated to revolution; the progressive Christians have been 'Marxianised' when they were supposed to be Christianising the workers.

The Catholic faith is not incompatible with sympathy for the progressive parties, for the working-class movement, for the planned society, but it is incompatible with messianic Marxism because the latter sees the path of salvation in the historical process. The liberation which is the aim of Communist action is capable of objective description. In spite of the price that must be paid, it is legitimate in certain cases to prefer revolutionary violence to the slow process of reform. But it is only through a strictly religious interpretation of events that 'ideal' emancipation can be made to appear as the *sine qua non* of all progress and the first step towards redemption. The Communists, who claim quite unashamedly to be atheists, are nevertheless imbued with a faith: they do not aim exclusively at a rational exploitation of natural resources and of communal life; they aspire to control all cosmic forces and all societies in order to solve the riddle of history and to

turn mankind away from meditation on the Fall on to the path of self-sufficiency.

* *Les Evénements et la Foi.*

Ideal emancipation bewitches left-wing Catholics in so far as it expresses itself in terms derived from Christian traditions. It bewitches the existentialists because the proletariat seems to offer a mythical community to philosophers obsessed by human solitude. It bewitches both because it contains in itself the poetry of the unknown, of the future, of the absolute.

The Dullness of Real Emancipation

Progressive Christians, in the strict sense of the term, are fairly few in France. Outside France, they hardly exist at all. As for the revolutionary phraseology of the existentialist philosophers, it has no equivalent in any other Western country. One might conclude from this that the nostalgia for 'ideal' liberation and contempt for 'real' emancipation is a phenomenon confined strictly to France, if not to Paris. And yet I am not at all sure that its significance does not extend well beyond St. Germain-des-Prés. The allure of ideal emancipation is the counterpart of the disillusionment engendered by real emancipation. The allure is limited to a narrow circle, but I fear that the disillusionment is fairly widespread. The workers of the West have merely swelled the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie; instead of bringing a renewal of civilisation, they have tended towards the diffusion of a sort of second-hand culture. The present phase, which may perhaps be transitory, cannot but be disheartening to the intellectuals.

The theorists of the working-class movement in the last century had conceived three methods which might loosely be called those of revolution, reform and revolutionary syndicalism. The first has succeeded in Russia and China, the second in most Western countries, the third nowhere. This last method, in many ways the most attractive, postulated the taking-over of industry plant by plant by the workers on the spot, self-confident and proud of their class, refusing to submit themselves to the paternalism of the capitalists or to identify themselves with the petty bourgeoisie. Nowhere has this yet happened. And, of course, it could not be otherwise.

The progress of technology enlarges the role of administrative and research staffs and demands more highly skilled engineers; it reduces the number of

unskilled labourers, but also of vocational workers, and demands a category of specialised labour requiring only a few weeks' training.

What would be the significance of the management of production by the producers themselves? The election of their own leaders? The frequent consultation of works committees or a general assembly of employees? Such practices would be absurd or derisory. One can conceive of a progressive transformation of an enterprise, a sharing of profits, equitable methods of pay. The suppression of the wage scale, which demagogues talk about from time to time, is possible only in a symbolic sense. If one agrees to define wages as the fixed remuneration, by the hour or by piece-work, paid by a private employer, the worker in the Renault or Gorki factories is no longer a wage-earner. Since the revolution is not carried out by the workers themselves in each individual enterprise, it has to fall back on political organisation—trade unions and parties. In the British trade unions, the workers are enrolled in a vast and peacefully-inclined movement whose leaders often end their careers in the House of Lords or on the boards of nationalised industries. Has the emancipation of the English proletariat been the work of the proletariat itself? In a sense, yes. The Labour Party was not built up without a struggle; it was, and it remains, financed and sustained by the trade unions. But the latter *represent* the workers, most of whom are passive and are no more anxious to assume responsibilities inside the nationalised industries than in private industry. Under a Labour Government, when some of their own union leaders have become Ministers of the Crown, the workers show no less alacrity in claiming wage increases than under a Conservative Government. The Labour administration is *theirs,* but so in a sense is the Conservative: in both cases, the workers recognise themselves in their rulers because they do not feel themselves to be morally cut off from the rest of the community.

The breaking-down of traditional class barriers has perhaps gone further in other countries. Many observers regard Sweden as a classless society, so uniform has the people's way of life become, so much has the awareness of belonging to a particular class diminished.

It would be intolerably hypocritical on the part of those who deplore the misery of the proletariat to sneer at the results achieved by non-doctrinaire socialism. Possibly in our age there can be no question of any higher objective. On the other hand, one has no right to be surprised at the reservations of intellectuals who had pinned their hopes on the working-class movement.

We are told *ad nauseam* by the editors of *Esprit* that the proletariat is the trustee of universal values and that its struggle is therefore that of humanity as a whole. From which there follows a multitude of vague and muddle-headed assertions. We can be "grateful to Marx for having made us understand that the progress of philosophy is linked to the progress of a proletariat which behaves as the trustee of values which transcend it". "It is for all these reasons that the advancement of the working class is the event in which one must participate today in order to be able to think". "The proletariat is the trustee of the future only in so far as its liberation is intended as the liberation of all and not as a reversal of power which would replace a tyranny of money by the dictatorship of deified labour".*

* *Esprit,* 1951, Nos. 7-8.

What is the 'advancement of the working class' in which the professor of philosophy assures us that he participates? If it means the raising of the standard of living, the extension of trade unionism, social legislation or the humanisation of industrial relations, one would certainly agree. But these reforms do not raise the working class to the top of the ladder. The worker, in contact with brute matter, committed to the daily grind, is perhaps protected against the depravities of those who live in the world of words. Technological progress, which replaces the hand by the machine and physical effort by 'know-how', does not 'advance' him. The manual worker remains at the foot of the social ladder, not through the fault of capitalism or socialism but through the determinism of science applied to industry.

In a certain sense, the advancement of the working class is an actual fact. The day is past when the underprivileged, excluded from any chance of learning, enclosed in small communities with no means of contact with the outside world, were strangers to the march of history. Men can now read and write, they live cheek by jowl in big cities, they are flattered by the powerful who want to rule in their name. But, as one knows only too well, the century of the common man is also the century of dictatorships, war, conspiracies and fascist beasts. The assassination of emperors or police chiefs in the shadow of palaces belongs to the same epoch as the Nuremberg Rally or May Day parades in Moscow. The strength of working-class organisations involves a growing passivity in the individual worker. On both sides of the Iron Curtain the culture peculiar to the working class is dying out as more and more proletarians adopt bourgeois habits and values and avidly absorb the revolting literature of the so-called popular press or of 'socialist realism'.

The catch-phrases 'tyranny of money' and 'civilisation of labour' are even more ambiguous than the one about the 'advancement of the working class'. One senses what the people who use them are after: should not men be prepared to give of their best in the service of a collectivity, of an ideal? At the risk of being accused of cynicism, I refuse to believe that any social order can be based on the virtue and disinterestedness of citizens. To obtain the maximum return, planners have long since returned to the system of the wage scale and even of the profit motive: the Soviet factory boss himself pockets the major portion of the factory's surplus fund.

Anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois literature has been full of invective against money ever since the famous pages of the young Marx. At the same time, the Left has adopted the ideal of universal comfort rejected by those thinkers who retain a nostalgia for aristocratic civilisations. The enemies of the modern world—such writers as Léon Bloy, Bernanos and Simone Weil—have the right to denounce money. But the progressives, annoyed by the fact that after two centuries the machine has failed to triumph over millennial poverty, and that proletarian classes and nations are still not granted a fair share of the world's riches—one wonders what miracle they are Counting on. Unless they believe in a sudden conversion of the old Adam, they must pin their hopes on a prodigious increase of available wealth, and, to this end, offer the prospect of worldly rewards to the most energetic and the most ambitious. Planning and collective ownership eliminate certain forms of profit, but not the greed for the things of this world, in short the desire for money. Modern economy, whether socialist or capitalist, is inevitably a monetary economy.

There exists in every society a minority which is indifferent to money and prepared for self-sacrifice. Such people are more numerous in revolutionary parties, or in régimes which have recently emerged from a revolution, than in stabilised régimes. They are particularly rare in civilisations where the emphasis is on worldly success, on business triumphs. Human nature is not very amenable to the wishes of the ideologists. The ban on Communist Party members receiving higher salaries than the workers did not long survive the early phase of enthusiasm. In the course of the Five-Year Plans the age-old slogan 'get rich quick' was soon added to the Marxist formula 'to each according to his needs'. The Communists were allowed the right to accumulate power and worldly possessions. As a reward for services rendered to the community, the 'proletarian' élite now finds it only natural to live like the aristocracy of yesterday. It is possible, and even probable, that the citizens

of Soviet Russia are no more resentful of the privileges of their managers than are American citizens of those of their capitalists.

But, it will be objected, in the Soviet Union money does not rule since the rich do not hold the reins of power. It is true that they do not exercise power *by virtue* of their riches: the ruling class derives its authority from the Party and the Idea. In the eyes of the governed, the legitimacy of the governors is less important than the way they exercise their authority. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, economic power and political power are in the. same hands; on this side, they are divided among interdependent and rival groups. The division of powers is the prerequisite of liberty.

Idealist revolutionaries assign to the working class the superhuman mission of putting an end to the all too tangible evils of industrial society. They have not the honesty to admit that the proletariat, as it becomes gradually and inevitably more bourgeois, loses the virtues which seemed to make it worthy of this high calling.

Dissatisfaction with 'real' emancipation, with the prosaic common sense of free trade unionism, makes intellectuals more susceptible to the siren charms of ideal emancipation. The 'real' emancipation of the worker in Great Britain or in Sweden is as boring as an English Sunday; the 'ideal' emancipation of the Soviet worker is as exciting as a leap into the future or a cataclysm. Perhaps television sets will remove the martyr's halo from the emancipated proletarians of Moscow.

Existentialists and left-wing Christians both seem to subscribe to the formula of M. Francis Jeanson: "The vocation of the proletariat is not within history—it is to bring about the transformation of history". M. Claude Lefort has also decreed as follows: "Because it aims at an essential objective—the abolition of exploitation—the political struggle of the workers must fail absolutely if it falls short of success". In the absence of an exact definition of exploitation—at what stage, one wonders, does inequality of incomes or a working contract between a private employer and a wage-earner involve exploitation?—this last proposition is somewhat equivocal. Whichever way one looks at it, it is false: proletariats have won partial successes, they have never succeeded completely. And there is nothing to suggest that the industrial workers are specially predestined to transform history. In the eyes of these philosophers and Christians, it is suffering, the living proof of social injustice and human misery, which qualifies the proletariat for this unique

destiny. The sufferings of the Western proletarians must still give the privileged a bad conscience. But what are they beside those of the 'leprous minorities', the shameful symbol of our day—the Jews exterminated by the Third Reich, the Trotskyists, Zionists, 'cosmopolitans', Baits and Poles hounded by the fury of the Secretary-General of the Communist Party, the inmates of concentration camps doomed to a slow death, the negroes of South Africa herded into reserves, the displaced persons, the sub-proletariats of the United States and France? If suffering confers a vocation, it is the victims of racial, ideological and religious persecution who should be the chosen of today.

The 'contradiction' between industrial wage-earners and private employers is the one which Communism has most difficulty in exploiting in the twentieth century—in the underdeveloped countries because the proletarians are not numerous enough, in capitalist countries because they are not revolutionary enough. It achieves much greater success when it stirs up nationalist passions or irredentist claims in colonial countries. The twentieth century is the century of racial or national wars rather than that of the class war in the classic sense of the word.

The fact that proletarians as such are less inclined to violence than nations deprived of their independence, or races treated as inferiors, is easily explicable as soon as one forgets party dogma. Industrial wage-earners are held down willy-nilly by the discipline of labour. They erupt from time to time against the tyranny of the machine or of the bosses, in periods of 'primitive' accumulation, of technological unemployment or of deflation. These explosions imperil weak states or faint-hearted rulers. When they are organised, the workers find themselves doubly insured—by the apparatus of production as well as the apparatus of trade unionism. The yield from both increases simultaneously: the first produces more commodities and the second puts an increasing proportion of them at the disposal of the wage-earners. Inevitably, the latter resign themselves to their condition; and trade union leaders are not entirely reluctant to receive a share of power and its benefits.

The peasants, resentful against the big landowners because they aspire to the possession of the land, should be far more disposed to violence. It is in the countryside that the question of ownership has a real and decisive importance. The more modern industry develops, the less the pattern of ownership matters. No-one is the owner of the Kirov works or of General

Motors. The differences concern the recruitment of managers and the division of power.

Supposing the phrase 'transformation of history' to have any meaning at all, the class least capable of accomplishing it seems to me to be the working class. Revolutions in industrial societies alter the idea which the workers have of their situation and of those who control them. They transform the relations between the twin hierarchies, techno-bureaucratic and politico-syndicalist. The effect of the great revolutions of the twentieth century is to subordinate the latter to the former.

In a régime such as the Third Reich, or in Soviet Russia, the leaders of working-class organisations are far more concerned with conveying the orders of the State to the wage-earners than putting the workers' claims and grievances before the State. True, the masters of the State claim to have the suffrage of the community as a whole, and the members of the Politburo are the elect of History. On the pretext that the Secretary-General of the Party is the guide of the proletariat, certain Western philosophers suddenly find legitimate the very practices for which they used to blame the capitalists (forced saving, piece-work wages, etc.) and approve of the restraints which they would be the first to denounce if the democrats were guilty of them. The workers of Eastern Germany, when they strike against the raising of norms, are traitors to their class. If Herr Grotewohl was not a disciple of Marx, he would be dubbed the scourge of the proletariat. Such is the magical virtue of words!

Totalitarian régimes bring about the reunion of the technical and the political hierarchies. Whether one acclaims or curses them, one cannot possibly regard them as novelties unless one totally ignores the experience of the centuries. The free societies of the West, where powers are divided, where the State is undenominational, are the real oddities of history. Revolutionaries who dream of a total liberation are heralding the return to the outworn ideas of despotism.

CONCERNING POLITICAL OPTIMISM

LEFT, Revolution, Proletariat—these fashionable concepts are the latter-day counterparts of the great myths which once inspired political optimism: Progress, Reason, the People.

The Left, which includes all the parties seated on one side of the hemicycle, which is credited with immutable aims, an eternal vocation, exists by virtue of the notion that the future is better than the present and that the direction in which societies must move is fixed once and for all. The myth of the Left presupposes the myth of Progress; it retains the historic vision of the latter, though without the same confidence—for the Left cannot help but find itself confronted with a Right which bars its way and is never conquered or converted.

In the myth of the Revolution, this inconclusive struggle is represented as an ineluctable necessity. The resistance of vested interests, of elements hostile to the radiant, lyrical future, can only be broken by force. On the face of it, Revolution and Reason are diametrically opposed: the latter suggests discussion, the former, violence. Either one argues and ends up by convincing one's opponent, or one renounces argument and resorts to arms. Yet violence has been and continues to be the last resort of a certain rationalist impatience. Those who claim to know the form which institutions should be made to assume are enraged by the blindness of their fellow-men and lose faith in words, forgetting that the same obstacles arising from the nature of individuals and societies will always be there and that the revolutionaries, when they have made themselves masters of the State, will be faced with the same alternative of compromise or despotism.

The mission assigned to the proletariat bespeaks a lesser degree of hope than the virtue which used to be ascribed to the people. To believe in the people was to believe in humanity as a whole. To believe in the proletariat is to believe in election by suffering. People and proletariat both symbolise the truth of simple creatures, but the people remains, in law, universal—one can conceive at a pinch that the privileged themselves could be included in the communion—while the proletariat is one class among many others, it achieves its triumph by liquidating the other classes and cannot become identified with the social whole except after much strife and bloodshed. Whoever speaks in the name of the proletariat will recall, throughout the centuries, slaves at grips with their masters; he cannot believe any longer in

the progressive development of a natural order, but counts on the crowning revolt of the slaves to eliminate slavery.

These three notions call for judicious interpretation. The Left is the party which refuses to resign itself to injustice and which maintains, against the equivocations of authority, the rights of the free conscience. A revolution, especially in retrospect, is a lyrical or exciting event, often inevitable, which it would be as deplorable to desire for its own sake as to condemn out of hand: there is no proof that the ruling classes have learned their lesson or that one can always remove unworthy rulers without violating the law or resorting to arms. The proletariat, in the precise sense of the working masses brought into being by heavy industry, has received from no-one, unless it be an intellectual of German origin who took refuge in Great Britain towards the end of the last century, the mission to 'transform history'; but today it represents not so much the immense class of the victims as the cohorts of workers organised by managers and inspired by demagogues.

These notions cease to be rational and become mythical in consequence of an intellectual error. To re-establish the continuity of the Left across the centuries or to disguise the divisions inside the Left in any given epoch, it is necessary to forget the dialectic of régimes, the shifting of values from one party to another, the adoption by the Right of liberal values against planning and centralisation, the necessity of establishing a common-sense compromise between contradictory aims.

The historical experience of the twentieth century reveals the frequency and the causes of revolutions in the industrial age. The error is to attribute to the Revolution a logic which it does not possess, to see it as the logical end of a movement which is based on reason, and to expect it to produce benefits which are incompatible with its very essence. It is not unprecedented for a society to return to the path of peace, after a revolutionary explosion, with a positive balance sheet. But revolutionary means remain on balance contrary to the ends envisaged. Internecine violence is the negation, perhaps sometimes inevitable, of the mutual sympathy which should unite the members of a community. By uprooting tradition and mutual respect, it risks destroying the foundation of civil peace.

The proletariat cannot help but demand, and obtain, a place in the communities of our time. In the last century it appeared to be the general drudge of industrial societies; since then, economic progress in the West has made it the freest and the best-paid slave in history and the prestige of

suffering should now be transferred to those minorities which are worse treated. Servant of the machine, soldier of the Revolution, the proletariat as such is never either the symbol or the beneficiary or the leader of any régime whatsoever. It is through a kind of intellectual sleight-of-hand that the régime whose authority derives from Marxist ideology has been baptised proletarian.

The common source of these errors is a kind of visionary optimism combined with a pessimistic view of reality. You pin your faith to a Left which constantly recruits the same men in the service of the same causes. You never weary of anathematising an eternal Right which is always defending sordid interests, always incapable of reading the signs of new times. The leaders of the Left are placed in the middle of the hierarchy, mobilising those below to drive out those above: they are the semi-privileged who represent the underprivileged until victory will make them privileged. These commonplaces are not quoted for the sake of an exercise in cynicism: neither political régimes nor economic systems are ever quite alike. But common sense ordains that one should not give to a highly ambiguous term, an ill-defined hotch-potch, a prestige and significance which belong strictly to the realm of ideas. Despotism has so often been established in the name of liberty that experience should warn us to judge parties by their practices rather than their preachings, and to avoid acts of faith or rash verdicts on this dubious battlefield where language muffles thought and values are constantly shifting.

It is wrong to expect salvation from triumphant catastrophe, wrong to despair of victory in peaceful struggle. Violence allows a short cut to the ultimate goal, it liberates energies, encourages the rise of new talent, but also destroys traditional restraints on the authority of the State, and spreads the taste and the habit of forcible solutions. Time is needed to cure the ills bequeathed by a revolution, even when the latter has cured the ills of the previous régime. When a legitimate authority has collapsed, a group of men, sometimes a single man, takes over the responsibility for the common destiny, in order, say the faithful, that the revolution shall not die. In fact, in the general free-for-all, a leader must emerge to re-establish the first essential, which is security. How can an event which, like war, eliminates discussion and opens every possibility by denying every norm, bring salvation to humanity?

It is nothing but raving optimism to designate the proletariat for a task which is beyond it, and excessive pessimism to put the other classes beyond the pale. One realises that, in any given period, one nation may be more creative than the rest. According to Hegel's formula, the spirit of the world is embodied by different nations in turn. The sequence of the Reformation, the bourgeois Revolution and the social Revolution may be interpreted in terms of the Germany of the sixteenth century, the France of the eighteenth and the Russia of the twentieth as the successive instruments of Reason. But Hegel's philosophy refuses to allow to any given society a political and moral virtue which puts it above common laws. There are exceptional beings: there is no exceptional society.

Classes are even less amenable than nations to division between the elect and the outcasts. Either they constitute agglomerations as vast as that of the industrial workers, and in this sense they participate more by their suffering than by their collective will in the drama of history. Or they represent powerful minorities, nobility or bourgeoisie, and they have a function to fulfil, a task to achieve, not a transformation to accomplish. The proletariat, submitted to the rude discipline of the factory, does not change its nature in changing its master, any more than it changes the nature of societies.

That is the nub of the debate. Historical optimism, tinged with pessimism, demands an upheaval of the immemorial order of societies. It regards what is as scandalous, it wants what will be to be essentially different. It therefore pins its faith in the progressive parties, in violence, in a particular class, to operate the transition, gradual or abrupt, to the reign of liberty. And it is always disappointed, in fact it condemns itself to disappointment because the characteristics of the social structure it inveighs against appear to be immutable.

One may rely on popular suffrage and not on birth for the choice of one's political leaders, one may place the control of the means of production in the hands of the State rather than in those of private individuals—the suppression of a hereditary aristocracy or a capitalist oligarchy still does not change the social order, because it does not change the essence of *homo politicus.*

The existence of States is constantly threatened by internal dissolution or external aggression. To defend themselves against aggression, States must be strong. To resist disintegration, the central authority must maintain the solidarity and discipline of its citizens. Inevitably, the theorist inclines to a pessimistic view of politics. Man appears to him to be unreliable and

vainglorious, he is never satisfied with his lot, he is always aspiring to power and prestige. This judgment may be partial and oversimplified, but it is incontestable as far as it goes. Whoever enters the political arena and acquires a taste for power is liable to throw the Republic into disorder merely to satisfy his ambitions and avenge himself on his envied opponents.

Neither public order nor the power of the State constitutes the sole objective of politics. Man is also a moral animal and a society is human only in so far as it allows every one of its members to participate. But the basic imperatives survive all changes of régime: no miracle can give political man an exclusive preoccupation with the public good or the wisdom to be content with the place which chance or merit have given him. The dissatisfaction which prevents societies from becoming crystallised in an arbitrary structure, the appetite for honours which inspires both the great builders and the petty intriguers, will continue to convulse the body politic even after the Left has transformed it, the Revolution has done its work and the proletariat won its victory. For this supposed victory raises as many problems as it resolves. If the privileges of the nobility are destroyed all that is left is the authority of the State or of those who draw their pay from it. The disappearance of the privileges conferred by birth allows free reign to those acquired through money. The destruction of local communities reinforces the prerogatives of the central power. Two hundred functionaries take the place of the 'two hundred families'. When the Revolution has stamped out respect for tradition and spread hatred of the privileged, the masses are ready to bow down before the leader with the sword until the day comes when passions are spent, order is restored, and the councils of reason have regained the ascendancy.

These three myths—the Left, the Revolution and the Proletariat—are refuted not so much by their failure as by the successes they have achieved. The Left, in opposing the *Ancien Régime,* stood for freedom of thought, for the application of science and reason to the organisation of society, for the rejection of hereditary rights: clearly, it has won its battle. Today there is no longer any question of advancing always in the same direction, but of balancing planning with initiative, fair shares for all with incentives to effort, the power of the bureaucracy with the rights of the individual, economic centralisation with the safeguard of intellectual liberties.

In the Western world, the Revolution is behind us not in front of us. Even in Italy and in France we no longer have any Bastilles to storm or aristocrats

to string up. The object of any possible revolution now would be to reinforce the State, to restrain vested interests, to accelerate social changes. Against the old ideal of a society which is stable in its customs and in its laws, both Left and Right in the middle of the twentieth century are equally committed to the permanent revolution which American propaganda boasts about and which is also attributed, in another sense, to Soviet society. Conservatism, after the fashion of Burke, limited to a narrow circle of intellectuals, is at pains to counteract, not economic progress, but the decomposition of eternal moral values.

No doubt there is an immense gap between expectation and achievement. Societies are no more peaceable for having been rationalised by science; in fact they seem to be no more rational than those of yesterday. If it is true that one small injustice suffices to dishonour a régime, not one, in our age, is free from guilt. One may count the percentage of individual incomes which fall below the decent minimum, but one has only to compare the division of wealth and the standards of government of a century ago with those of today to realise that the growth of collective resources makes societies more egalitarian and less tyrannical. They remain none-the-less subject to the old, blind necessities of work and of power, and *ipso facto,* in the eyes of the optimists, unacceptable.

When we observe the functioning of a constitution or of an economic system, we have the impression, probably false and certainly superficial, that chance or tradition or madness continue to rule. The way men live together seems absurd to those whose ideal is the rule of technological reason. Faced with this disillusionment, the reaction of the intellectuals is to try to discover the causes of the gap between the dreams of yesterday and the reality, or else to take up these dreams once more and project them on to the quite different realities of today. In Asia, these myths continue to mould the future, whatever the deceptions and illusions they involve. In Europe, they are no longer effectual and justify verbal indignation rather than action.

Reason has achieved all that it promised to and even more, but it has not changed the essence of societies. Instead of establishing how far human nature is amenable to progress and making allowances, people endow a strange demiurge called History with a power possessed neither by parties nor classes nor by violence. Together, and with time's aid, will they not bring about the transformation which rationalism, with its nostalgia for religious truths, never ceases to hope for?

PART II

THE IDOLATRY OF HISTORY

CHAPTER IV

CHURCHMEN AND THE FAITHFUL

MARXISM now plays little part in the culture of the West, even in France and in Italy where an important minority of the intelligentsia has thrown in its lot with Communism. It would be difficult to find an economist worthy of the name who could be termed Marxist in the strict sense of the word. One man will perceive in *Das Kapital* the foretaste of Keynesian truths, another will see it as an existential analysis of private ownership or the capitalist system. None would prefer the categories of Marx to the categories of bourgeois science when it came to explaining the world as it is. In the same way, it would be difficult to find a notable historian whose work derived from or was consciously influenced by dialectical materialism.

It is true, of course, that no modern historian or economist would think exactly as he does if Marx had never existed. The economist has acquired an awareness of exploitation, or rather of the human cost of the capitalist economy, which must in fairness be credited to Marx. The historian no longer dare shut his eyes to the humble realities which rule the lives of millions of human beings. One can no longer claim to understand a society when one is ignorant of the organisation of labour, the technique of production and the relationship between the classes—though it does not yet follow that one can succeed in understanding the modalities of art or philosophy on the basis of technical 'know-how'.

In its original form Marxism remains a living issue in the ideological conflict of our time. The condemnation of private ownership or capitalist imperialism, the conviction that the market economy and the rule of the bourgeoisie tend towards their own destruction and the advent of socialist planning and the power of the proletariat—these fragments detached from the doctrine are accepted not only by Communists or fellow-travellers but by the immense majority of those who call themselves progressive. The so-called advanced intelligentsia, even in the Anglo-Saxon countries where it has never read *Das Kapital,* subscribes almost instinctively to these prejudices.

Outdated on the scientific plane, but more actual than ever on the ideological plane, Marxism as interpreted in present-day France appears

more than anything else as an interpretation of history. Men do not live through catastrophes such as those which have convulsed Europe during this century without exploring the meaning of these tragic or grandiose events. Marx himself sought to establish the laws according to which the capitalist system functions, maintains itself and develops. Neither the wars nor the revolutions of the twentieth century fit into the theory which he adumbrated. But nothing will prevent people from clinging to the same old words—Capitalism, Imperialism, Socialism—to describe realities which have become quite different. And the words enable them, not to explain scientifically the course of history, but to lend it a significance which is fixed in advance. Thus the catastrophes are transfigured into means of salvation.

In search of hope in an age of despair, the philosophers settle for an optimism based on catastrophe.

The Infallibility of the Party

Marxism is in itself a synthesis of all the principal themes of progressive thought. It pays homage to science which will guarantee the final victory; it exalts technology which disturbs the immemorial rhythm of human societies; it takes to itself the perennial human aspiration towards justice, and heralds the revenge of the unfortunate; it affirms that the unfolding of the drama of history is controlled by a determinism, but that this determinism is dialectical, implying a contradiction between successive régimes, a violent rupture in the transition from one régime to the next, and the final reconciliation of apparently contradictory demands. Pessimistic in the short run. optimistic in the long, it disseminates a romantic faith in the fruitfulness of upheavals. Every temperament, every type of mind, discovers an aspect of the doctrine which accords with its own preferences.

This synthesis has always been more attractive than logical. Those who do not see the light have always found it difficult to allow any compatibility between the intelligible character of historical totality and dialectical materialism. One could understand the final coincidence between the ideal and the real as long as history itself could be considered to be identical with the Progress of Spirit. Metaphysical materialism, as well as historical materialism, makes this combination of necessity and progress strange, if not contradictory. Why this ascent into a world at the mercy of natural forces? Why should history, whose structure is determined by the relations of

production, necessarily lead to a classless society? In what way do matter and economy bring us the certainty that the dream will become reality?

Stalinism aggravated the internal difficulties of Marxism by putting the accent on a vulgar materialism and, even more, by eliminating any pattern of historical evolution. The sacred history which Marxism extracts from the penumbra of profane facts goes from primitive communism to the socialism of the future: the lapse into private property, exploitation, the class struggle, were indispensable to the development of productive forces and man's achievement of a higher degree of control and awareness. Capitalism precipitates its own ruin by accumulating the means of production instead of allowing an equitable distribution of wealth. The situation in which the Revolution will break out will be unprecedented: the vast hordes of victims, the small number of oppressors, immeasurably increased productive forces, etc. After the cataclysm, the idea of progress will become valid. After the proletarian revolution, social progress will no longer require a political revolution.

In the days of German social-democracy and the second International, the theory of the self-destruction of capitalism was considered to be the essence of the dogma. Edouard Bernstein was condemned as a revisionist by the council meetings of the International, because he had cast doubt on one of the key arguments in this theory (concentration). But the dogmatism did not extend beyond the theory and the strategy which ensued from it (revolution at the end of the dialectic of capitalism). Differences of opinion inside each party or between national parties remained legitimate in day-to-day activity: tactics had no place in the sacred history.

Stalinism, however, changed all that.

The Russian Revolution of 1917, and the failure of the Revolution in the West, created an unforeseen situation which made a revision of the doctrine inevitable. The conceptions relating to the structure of history were retained; but, since the first triumph of the proletarian party had been in a country where the conditions of capitalist maturity laid down by Marx were not fulfilled, it had to be admitted that the development of productive forces alone does not determine the chances of the Revolution. Of course there was no question of going as far as proclaiming that the chances of the Revolution decline in proportion as capitalism progresses; but it was essential to loosen up the thesis, to suggest that *the* Revolution happens in the form of *revolutions* which break out at the whim of a variety of circumstances. The movement

which goes from capitalism to socialism became identified with the history of the Bolshevik Party.

In other words, to reconcile the events of 1917 with the doctrine, it was necessary to abandon the idea that history goes through the same stages in every country, and to decree that the Russian Bolshevik Party was the qualified representative of the proletariat. The seizure of power by the Party (or a national party owing allegiance to the Russian party) is the embodiment of the promethean act by which the oppressed shake off their chains. Each time the Party conquers a State the Revolution progresses, even if the millions of flesh-and-blood proletarians cannot recognise themselves in 'their' party or in the Revolution. For the third International, it is the identification of the world proletariat with the Russian Bolshevik Party which constitutes the primary object of the faith. The Communist, whether Stalinist or Malenkovist or Khruschevist, is above all a man who makes no distinction between the cause of the Soviet Union and the cause of the Revolution.

The history of the Party *is* the sacred history which will lead to the redemption of humanity. How could the Party possibly partake of the weaknesses inherent in profane works? Any man, even a Bolshevik, can make a mistake. The Party, in a certain sense, cannot and must not make a mistake, since it is the mouthpiece and the instrument of historical truth. But the action of the Party must be adapted to unpredictable circumstances. Militants whose loyalty is not in question can differ on the decision to be taken or the decision which ought to have been taken. Such controversies within the Party are legitimate, so long as they do not call in question the proletariat's delegation of authority to the Party. But when the Party is divided on a subject of great importance, for example the collectivisation of agriculture, only one point of view represents the Party, which is to say the proletariat and historical truth, and the other, the defeated opposition, has betrayed the sacred cause. Lenin never had any misgivings about his mission, which in his eyes was identical with the revolutionary vocation of the working class. The absolute authority acquired by a small group or by a single man over 'the vanguard of the proletariat' resolves the contradiction between the absolute value which has gradually come to be invested in the Party and the tortuous détours of an action involved in a history without structure.

A party which is always right must constantly define the correct line between sectarianism and opportunism. Where is this line situated? At an equal distance between the twin pitfalls of opportunism and sectarianism. But these pitfalls were themselves originally placed in relation to the correct line.

The only way out of the vicious circle is a decree by the central authority which defines truth and error alike. And this decree is inevitably arbitrary, since it is made by a man who decides autocratically between individuals and groups; the disparity between the world as it would be if the original doctrine were true, and the world as it is, subordinates the truth to the equivocal and inscrutable decisions of an interpreter whose only qualification is his power.

At the beginning, each economic system was defined by a type of ownership. The exploitation of the workers under capitalism was the result of private ownership of the instruments of production, poverty followed exploitation, and the development of productive forces would gradually eliminate intermediary groups. The Revolution would break out at the end of this process and the task of socialism would be to distribute equitably the fruits of capitalist accumulation. But the Revolution of 1917 had to set about imposing the equivalent of capitalist accumulation, while in Europe and in the United States, in spite of predictions based on a literal interpretation of Marxism, the standard of living of the masses rose and new middle classes continually filled the gaps which technological progress opened in the old.

These well-known facts do not in themselves refute the Communist interpretation of history. One may invoke philosophical reasons for characterising economico-social systems by the pattern of ownership, even if the standard of living is based not so much on this as on productivity. Nevertheless these facts make it essential to introduce a distinction between the subtle or esoteric meaning and the literal or vulgar meaning of words.

We have seen an example of this distinction in connection with the two varieties, ideal and real, of working-class emancipation. The worker in the Ford factories is exploited, if exploitation is, *by definition,* linked to the private ownership of the means of production and of the profits therefrom. The worker in the Putilov factories is 'emancipated' if, by working for the collectivity, he ceases, *by definition,* to be exploited. But the 'exploitation' of the American worker does not exclude the free election of trade union leaders, or strikes and wage discussions, or higher pay. The 'emancipation' of the Russian worker does not exclude the internal passport, or State control of trade unions, or lower wages than those of Western workers. The Soviet leaders are conscious of the fact that capitalist exploitation involves neither the impoverishment of the workers nor a reduction of their share of the national income. The greater the gap between the subtle and the literal sense of the words, the less the Soviet leaders can publicly admit the reality of this distinction. They are tempted, if not compelled, to offer the masses a view of

the world which is such that the subtle and the literal meanings coincide. The worker of Detroit, of Coventry, of Billancourt must, according to Moscow's propaganda, be wretched, and the worker of Kharkov or of Leningrad must enjoy a well-being unknown in the West. Since the Soviet State has acquired a monopoly of publicity, since it forbids its 'emancipated' proletarians to cross the frontier, this deliberately false representation of the world can be imposed with partial success on millions of men.

The same distinction between the esoteric and the common meaning of words can be found in connection with a variety of terms. Any victory, even a military victory, of the Communist Party is a victory for peace. A socialist country is essentially peaceable, since imperialism is merely the effect of capitalist contradictions. War is not condemned as such, but only when it is 'unjust', when it does not lead to the victory of socialism, that is to say of the Communist Party. In one sense peace, in the vulgar meaning of the word, signifies the absence of war. The Kremlin or the political bureau of the French Communist Party are quite aware of the esoteric doctrine of peace and of war. But in their propaganda they use the word peace as often as possible in the literal sense in order to flatter the pacifism of the masses.

This distinction between the two meanings explains the curious condemnation by Stalinism in the post-war years of the notion of objectivity. To consider the facts in themselves, without reference to the doctrine, was to commit a bourgeois error. But if it is legitimate to relate individual data to the whole, it is not legitimate to give facts a meaning which flatly contradicts them, on the pretext of a more profound understanding. The reinforcement of the police does not suggest a withering away of the State, nor the *Gleichschaltung* of the trade unions the approach of socialism. Thus, those who want to consider the plain facts and concrete realities—the organisation of power, the relationship of employers and employed—are on the path of heresy.

No-one knows how far the unconditional authority of the Party extends. During the Stalin-Zdhanov era, the Party laid down the law on the question of heredity, formulated its own theory of art, dabbled in linguistics and set down the truth of the past and of the future. But 'historical truth' was never more unamenable to literal interpretation. Trotsky's name was erased from the annals of the Revolution and the creator of the Red Army ceased, retrospectively, to exist.

The dialecticians who are responsible for the language which reverberates through the loudspeakers of Soviet propaganda make a distinction between the authentic doctrine and the ideologies which are made use of to attract or to win over this class or that nation. The doctrine as such lays it down that all religion is superstition, but in practice religious liberty is allowed: the Metropolitan of Moscow is used in the peace campaign with a view to winning over the Orthodox churches. The doctrine rejects nationalism and envisages a universal classless society; but when it is a question of resisting Hitlerite aggression, memories of Alexander Nevsky or of Suvorov are revived, the virtues of the Greater Russian people are extolled. Forty years ago, the conquests of the Tsarist armies were imperialist, today, those of the Red Army are 'progressive' by virtue of the superiority of the civilisation brought by the Russian troops, and of the revolutionary future promised in Moscow. Is the unique mission of the Greater Russian people an ideology exploited for opportunist motives by the psycho-technicians, or is it an element of doctrine?

Incapable of defining the orthodoxy, the faithful observe a strict discipline in what they say and probably a fairly considerable freedom in what they think. Czeslaw Milosz* has analysed the motives and the self-justifications of the intellectuals who had 'gone over', or were on the brink of doing so, in the People's Democracies. The intellectuals of Poland or of Eastern Germany have lived through the Soviet reality. They have the choice between submission, a hopeless resistance, or emigration. The intellectuals of the West are free.

Motives for adherence and the degree of belief vary from person to person: amongst believers the true community is that of the Church, not that of thought or of sentiment. True Communists acknowledge the Party as the representative of the cause of the proletariat, which is that of socialism. This act of faith does not exclude the most diverse interpretations. One man thinks that the Party is the indispensable agent of accelerated industrialisation and that it will wither away with the raising of the standard of living; another that socialism is destined for universal dissemination and that the West will inevitably be conquered or converted, not because it is morally or spiritually inferior but because it is historically condemned. One will hold socialist accumulation to be the essential and the ideological ravings of Communist propaganda as the deplorable accompaniment of a task ordained by Reason. Another may consider 'logocracy' as the glorious harbinger of the new world:

mechanised societies, having lost their faith in God, will be united under the yoke of a secular theology.

* *The Captive Mind* (London, 1953).

Optimists or pessimists, inspired by an infinite hope or resigned to an inhuman destiny, all the faithful accept their place in an undertaking which is beyond the scope of the individual and for which the Party assumes all responsibility. They are not unaware of the concentration camps or of the *Gleichschaltung* of culture, but they refuse to break their oath of allegiance to the grandiose undertaking. Let man in history regard his own epoch in the perspective which the passage of time allows to the historian: our grandsons will accept, perhaps with gratitude, so why not follow their example in advance? Between the militant who naively accepts from the Party his daily dose of truth and the man who knows the world *objectively,* stripped of all the veils of meaning, there are infinite gradations.

However indefinable, this orthodoxy is nevertheless commanding and persuasive. It enhances the prestige of Marxist ideas through the power of a single fact: the Party is master of the Soviet State and of an immense empire. Those who invoke the ideas, without bowing down before the fact, hover on the threshold, inclined sometimes to fulminate against the fact in the name of the idea, sometimes to justify the fact by the idea. The Stalinist does not always know exactly what he believes in, but he believes strongly that the Bolshevik Party or the Praesidium has been invested with a historical mission. This belief might have seemed ludicrous in 1903, strange in 1917, dubious in 1939. Since then, it has been sanctified by the god of battles. What other party could be worthy of embodying the cause of the world proletariat?*

Revolutionary Idealism

Victory always puts the conscience of the revolutionary to the test: an idealist rebel against the established order, he now becomes privileged in his turn. Society, after the interlude of enthusiasm and violence, returns to normal life. Even if it had not been captured by Stalin and had not had to build up a heavy industry from scratch, the régime introduced by the Bolsheviks would have disappointed the faithful.

The latter tend to hover between two attitudes: either to maintain that, in spite of all, the new régime, true to its inspiration, is progressing towards its goal, or to denounce the disparity between what the prophets heralded before the seizure of power and the actual State built up by the bureaucrats. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the first attitude is more usual than the second: disappointment expresses itself not by revolt but by mental reservations; the situation is justified by necessity, it is no longer identified with the ideal. On this side of the Iron Curtain, in France in particular, the second attitude is frequently met with among intellectuals.

Non-Stalinist revolutionaries imagine a revolution which would break with capitalism just as radically as Bolshevism, but would avoid the decline into bureaucracy, the primitive dogmatism, and the excesses of the Police State. These people represent a variety of Trotskyism, if one agrees to use this term to designate those Marxists who continue to acclaim the events of 1917 but criticise, more or less vigorously according to circumstances, certain aspects of the Soviet régime. The Trotskyists tend to take the side of the Soviet Union as against the capitalist states. Hostile to the bourgeois world, which allows them to live and express themselves freely, they retain a nostalgia for the other world which would ruthlessly eliminate them if it had the chance but which, distant and fascinating, embodies their dreams and the cause of the proletariat.

* One has only to realise that there is no such thing as a world proletariat, or a cause of the proletariat, for the muddle to be cleared up at once.

Ever since the consolidation of the Stalinist dictatorship, no non-Stalinist revolutionary has had a political role of any importance. In Parisian intellectual circles, however, they lead the field and existentialists such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have given a kind of philosophical respectability to a revolutionary idealism which the tragic life of Trotsky together with the realism of Stalin would seem to have condemned.

Christian or rationalist, these rebels in quest of a revolution all go back to the writings of Marx's youth, just as the Protestants whose spiritual hunger the Church failed to satisfy were wont to re-read the Gospels. The *Economico-Political Manuscripts,* the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law,* the *German Ideology,* contain the original message taken up by the existentialists in order both to keep their distance from the Soviet regime and to abandon nothing of their opposition to capitalism.

Humanisme et Terreur is the most systematic statement of this way of thought. The editors of *Esprit* and *Les Temps Modernes* have on many occasions made use of arguments which mostly derive from ideas developed by M. Merleau-Ponty. Sartre's speculations on the proletariat represent only one aspect of the demonstration.

Reduced to its essentials, the latter is more or less as follows: Marxist philosophy is true, unquestionably true, in a double sense. It has set down the conditions which are indispensable to the 'humanisation' of societies. It has also sketched out the route via which the 'radical solution of the problem of coexistence', that of proletarian revolution, will have a chance of being achieved. The proletariat, which is the only 'authentic intersubjectivity', the 'universal class', must form itself into a party, overthrow capitalism, and emancipate all mankind in emancipating itself.

There could be no question either of reconsidering the fundamental meaning of this philosophy or of proceeding beyond it, but one might well ask oneself whether the proletariat, under the direction of the Communist Party, is on the way to accomplishing the mission which the philosophers have ascribed to it. There are strong reasons to doubt the fidelity of the Soviet Union to proletarian humanism under the reign of Stalin. But no class, no party, no individual could possibly take the place of the proletariat: the failure of the latter would be the failure of humanity itself. So the Soviet camp must be given the benefit of the doubt, which is refused to the bourgeois capitalist democracies who keep the fruits of their liberties for the few and camouflage their iniquities—colonialism, unemployment, the wage scale—under the cloak of hypocritical ideologies.

"Examined closely, Marxism is not just *one* among many hypotheses replaceable tomorrow by another; it is a simple statement of the conditions without which there will be no humanity in the sense of a reciprocal relationship between men and no rationality in history. In a sense it is not *a* philosophy of history, it is *the* philosophy of history, and to refuse to accept it is to blot out historical reason. After which there will be nothing left but dreams or aimless adventure."*

This paragraph, quite startling in its naïve dogmatism, is highly revealing. It expresses the conviction of so many intellectuals throughout the world: that Marxism must be identified with *the* philosophy of history, must be definitively true.

Of what, in the view of our author, does this definitive truth consist? It includes neither the primacy of the relations of production, nor a diagram of historical development; it involves two essential ideas: one must study the way people live in order to understand politico-economic systems, and the truly human community is characterised by mutual 'recognition' or 'acknowledgment'.

These two ideas are acceptable provided that one clears up the ambiguity of the first and stresses the formal nature of the second. It is true that the criticism of ideologies which is said to have originated with Marx marks an advance in political awareness. One would no longer dare to justify capitalism as being the model of perfect competition or parliamentary régimes as representing the ideal of self-government. It does not follow that the person is nothing outside his social role, that social relationships absorb the existence of each and everyone. Under cover of a perfectly valid criticism, M. Merleau-Ponty slips in a denial of transcendence and the spiritual life.

* *Humanisme et Terreur,* p. 165.

Isolated from a philosophy, the notion of 'recognition' is neither more precise nor more concrete than that of liberty. What are the requirements of such recognition? What degree of diversity is compatible with it? These questions are not answered in *Humanisme et Terreur.*

The idea and the word 'recognition' originate from the philosophy of Hegel even more than from the writings of the young Marx. In this philosophy, 'recognition' or 'acknowledgment' is defined on the basis of the dialectic of the master and the slave, of war and of labour. Granted that M. Merleau-Ponty has taken up this dialectic and that he also counts on technological progress and the universal state to put an end to it, unlike Marx he has no global conception of history at his disposal. Marxian criticism was developed in terms of an idea of history and of man which was held in advance to be true: reality did not conform to the idea of himself that man, according to *the* philosophy, that is to say, Hegel's, had been able to acquire. There was not so much doubt about the end as about the way and the means. Marx dedicated his life not to ratiocination on philosophical themes but to the analysis of economy and society in order to trace the course of reason through the confusion of events. A phenomenological doctrine, which claims to describe the experiences of all and takes no account of whether the procession of societies fulfils the aim of human progress, must give some substance to the

notion of recognition. In the absence of this, it does not permit one to judge the present or to decide the future.

All complex societies are characterised by an unequal distribution of power and of wealth, and a rivalry between individuals and groups for the possession of these—in other words, to quote our author, "the power of the few and the resignation of the rest". If one aims to abolish inequalities and rivalries, if the authority of the few is no longer to require the resignation of the rest, then the post-revolutionary State demands a transfiguration of the social condition of everyone. Thus the young Marx speculated on the possibility of eliminating the distinction between subject and object, existence and essence, Nature and Man. But in doing this one leaves the realm of rational thought and simply translates into philosophical language the dreams of the millennium or the religious yearning for the end of the world.

On the other hand, if one keeps down to earth, it is essential to specify the organisation of State and economy which would ensure this reciprocal recognition. Marx was writing a century ago at a time when the proletariat as we know it was in its infancy, when modern industry was symbolised by textile factories, when the joint stock company was almost unknown. He could lay the blame for every evil at the door of private ownership and the mechanism of the market, attribute incomparable virtues to public ownership and planning, without the risk of being refuted by contemporary experience. In our day, to define the Soviet Union by the Marxist desire for a 'radical solution to the problem of coexistence' would be tantamount to defining colonisation as the desire to evangelise the pagans.

How could a revolution be expected to change at one blow the condition of the proletarians? How could it be expected to usher in the era of mutual recognition? As soon as one moves from the philosophical to the sociological plane, one has a choice of two answers. Either one defines institutions in relation to an idea: if the worker who works for a private employer is 'alienated', alienation will disappear as from the day when all the workers, thanks to collective ownership and planning, are directly in the service of the collectivity, that is to say of universality. Or one considers prosaically the conditions of men under different régimes, their standard of living, their rights, their obligations, the discipline to which they are submitted, the prospects of promotion which are open to them. This alternative brings us back to that of 'ideal' and 'real' emancipation, or again to the esoteric and the literal meaning of words. In the subtle sense, there are no more classes in

Russia, since all the workers are wage-earners, including Malenkov, and exploitation is by definition precluded. In the literal sense, régimes differ in degree and not in kind, each involves a certain kind of inequality, a certain type of power, and one will never have finished trying to humanise communal life.

Which of these two answers does M. Merleau-Ponty choose? An answer in the esoteric style, but using three criteria and not one only: collective economy, the spontaneity of the masses, and internationalism. Unfortunately, two of the three are too vague to form the basis for any judgment. The masses are never entirely passive and their action is never completely spontaneous. The masses who acclaimed Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin were subjected to intensive propaganda, not simple coercion. And one may well ask whether the domination of Eastern Europe by Communist parties, thanks to the presence of the Red Army, is a faithful expression or a caricature of internationalism.

Adopting quite uncritically a prejudice of the intelligentsia, our philosopher postulates that private ownership of the means of production is incompatible with men's mutual recognition or acknowledgment of one another. Like so many advanced thinkers, he subscribes naïvely to the daring ideas of yesterday, refusing to realise that there is no longer any great ideological significance in the opposition of the two types of ownership when it comes to the vast industrial enterprises of today. The American 'corporations' are no less far removed from what Marx denounced under the name of private ownership than are the factories of Soviet Russia.

These criteria are none-the-less sufficient to emphasise the gap between revolutionary idealism and Stalinist reality. The crystallisation of inequalities, the prolonging of the terror, the exalting of nationalism—these have nothing to do with the values which the Revolution was supposed to propagate. With a stroke of the pen, our philosopher draws a paradoxical conclusion from these doubts and anxieties. How can one condemn the Soviet Union, since the failure of the Bolshevik enterprise would be the failure of Marxism and therefore of history itself? This is an admirable piece of philosophical double-think, typical of our latter-day intelligentsia. They start with the idea of the recognition of man by man; they then proceed to the Revolution; they attribute to the proletariat, and to it alone, the capacity to bring about the Revolution; they subscribe implicitly to the claim of the Communist Party to be the sole representative of the proletariat; and when, finally, they observe with some disappointment the Stalinist reality, they do not question any of

the previous steps in the argument, they do not examine the validity of the idea of recognition, of the mission of the proletariat, of the Bolshevist technique of action, or of the use of force implied in total planning. If a revolution, carried out in the name of Marxism, lapses into tyranny, the fault cannot be that of Marx or of his interpreters. Lenin must have been right and M. Merleau-Ponty too, and History must have been wrong, or rather there is no such thing as history and the world is a 'senseless tumult'.

Why should the supreme test, of Marxism as of History, have to take place in the middle of the twentieth century and why should it necessarily be identified with the Soviet experiment? If the proletariat fails to set itself up as a universal class and fails to take upon itself the destiny of mankind, why not admit, instead of despairing of the future, that the philosophers were wrong to designate the industrial workers for such a unique mission? Why should not the 'humanisation' of society be the common aim and task, never fully achieved, of a humanity incapable of eliminating the gap between the real and the ideal, but also incapable of resigning itself to it? Why should the seizure of power by a totalitarian party be the indispensable prelude to this never-ending task?

To judge societies by the lot which they mete out to their members is to fall into an error which Marx himself, to his eternal credit, was the first to denounce. "It is a signal merit of Marxism and conducive to the progress of Western civilisation to have taught us to confront ideas with the social functions they are supposed to inspire, to confront our outlook with that of others, our morals with our politics". This could not be better said. But why should the revolutionaries be preserved from this confrontation?

Trials and Confessions

The great trials of 1936 and 1938 which resulted in the condemnation of Lenin's old comrades, and which were reproduced in the satellite states after Tito's defection, appear to many Western observers as the epitome of the Stalinist universe. Comparable to the trials of the Inquisition, they reveal the orthodoxy by highlighting the heresies. In this historical religion of action, the orthodoxy is concerned with the interpretation of past and future events and the heresies are all the deviations, breaches of discipline or errors of conduct. Since this religion takes no account of the spiritual life, of the purity of the soul, or of good intentions, any deviation in fact is at once a heresy as well as a schism.

These trials, whatever may be said of them, are not at all mysterious. Many first-hand witnesses have told us how the confessions were obtained. The physicist Weissberg, the Polish resister Stypolski, the American engineer Voegeler, among others, have given detailed accounts of their experiences. They have described the methods by which, during the great purges of 1936-37, in Moscow towards the end of the war, in Budapest under the Hungarian People's Democracy, Communists or non-Communists were persuaded to confess to crimes which they had not committed, crimes which were sometimes pure invention, sometimes criminal interpretations of acts which were indeed real but which, in themselves or in relation to their authors, were quite innocent.

The technique of these confessions does not necessarily presuppose any feeling of guilt on the part of the accused, or any doctrinal solidarity between the interrogators and the accused. The technique has been applied to non-Bolsheviks, revolutionary Socialists, or foreign engineers, for example, as well as to Party comrades who have fallen into disgrace. Simple considerations of political opportunism are at the root of it—the desire to convince the masses that the opposition is composed of people who stop at nothing in order to satisfy their hatred or ambition, that the capitalist powers are conspiring against the fatherland of the workers, that the difficulties of building up the Socialist State are attributable to the misdoings of its enemies. The Soviet Government is not alone in seeking scapegoats; every nation when in danger or stricken with defeat is liable to cry treason. The Communist confessions are merely an improvement on this age-old practice: the victim, on whom the anger of the masses is to be concentrated, himself proclaims the equity of the punishment meted out to him.

This explanation applies equally well in the cases of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and the rest. When the heroes of yesterday admit that they have plotted against the Party, planned or committed acts of sabotage and terrorism, and even had dealings with the police of the Third Reich, the cause of the Revolution and of the Fatherland becomes firmly identified with Stalin and his henchmen. All the trials are perfectly easily explained by the aim envisaged, the needs of governmental propaganda. The means by which the confessions are obtained are similar in the various cases but adapted to the personality of the accused, psychological with one, physical with another. A scientific mixture of threats and promises can always do the trick, for in the

last resort the most refined tortures can be reduced to elementary principles —a simple art, Napoleon would have said, which is all in the execution.

Why has there been so much cerebration in the West about this subject? Leaving aside the function of the purges inside the Soviet régime, two themes invite consideration. Do not the prosecutors, in the manner of the Spanish Inquisitors, even when they employ violence, have the feeling that they are genuinely establishing the truth in extracting the confessions? And does not this truth represent a kind of 'super-reality', even if the facts alleged are not materially exact? Then again, do not the accused feel themselves to be guilty, not in the literal sense whereby Bukharin is supposed to have planned the assassination of Lenin or Zinoviev had meetings with representatives of the Gestapo, but in the subtle sense whereby any suggestion of opposition would in actual fact, in the view of the judge as well as of the accused, be regarded as tantamount to treason?

There is no need to analyse the psychology of the old Bolsheviks, to disentangle the various causes and motives of their confessions, to decide how far they were the result of force, or vague feelings of actual guilt or even the desire to render a last service to the Party (after the fashion of the Japanese *kamikhaze*). It is more important to trace, through this famous example, the ambiguities of,the elusive orthodoxy and of revolutionary idealism, the historical representation of the world which is common to the 'Churchmen' and the 'faithful' and the source of their comparable errors.

Is the orthodox Stalinist the man who accepts word for word the testimony of the accused and the case for the prosecution? Does such a man exist? He will certainly not be found in the higher ranks of the hierarchy. Stalin himself and his comrades, the judges, are perfectly aware of the nonspontaneity of the confessions and the fabrication of the facts. The Party militants who experienced the purges, who helped to compose dossiers against themselves or their friends, can have few illusions about the truth of these narratives which corroborate one another but allow of no material proof. The facts cited are such as to arouse scepticism rather than belief. Can one believe that the average Russian, who is not a Bolshevik but who submits to the established authority, takes these detective stories literally, these wild fictions about terrorists and saboteurs? Can one believe that he accepts, in turn, first that the Kremlin doctors are white-coated assassins, then that they were unjustly accused? Such credulity should not be completely ruled out—one meets with it among a good many Frenchmen—but I doubt if it is very widespread. Even

if it were, the technique of the trials would be no more easily intelligible. If the Russians believe in the confessions, they must be ready to believe anything; so why take so much trouble to try to persuade them?

In any case the orthodox Stalinist cannot be defined as the man who takes the confessions literally: according to such a definition Stalin himself would be a heretic and all those who had access to the esoteric truth would be excluded from the orthodoxy. Unless they are to lapse into pure cynicism, the inner circles of the Party must have recourse to an interpretation analogous to that which Victor Serge outlined in *The Tulaev Affair,* which Arthur Koestler developed and popularised in *Darkness at Noon,* and which M. Merleau-Ponty has taken up in *Humanisme et Terreur,* at the same time violently criticising Koestler.

The principles of this interpretation are quite simple: the judge is not wrong to consider the oppositionist a traitor; the oppositionist, after his defeat, may well be inclined to admit that his victorious rival is in the right. The reasoning which leads to the first proposition is that of all revolutionaries, and it is inevitably current during periods of crisis. Whoever strays from the Party, and from the man who represents the cause, passes over into the enemy camp and works for the counterrevolution. Bukharin, by opposing the collectivisation of agriculture, provided arguments for the peasants who refused to enter the Kolkhozes, helped those who were sabotaging the Government's programme, and in fact associated himself with the external enemies who were endeavouring to weaken the Fatherland of the Revolution. The logic of opposition led him to defend or to reinstate capitalism in the agricultural areas. He acted *as if* he had gone over to the counterrevolutionary camp, and, since politicians are required to account for their actions and not their intentions, he was objectively guilty of betraying the Party and, by the same token, the cause of Socialism. This method, known as that of the 'chain of identifications', is used all the more willingly by the Bolsheviks since they are more disposed than other revolutionaries to the cult of the Party. The absolute value ascribed to the ultimate end, the classless society, is transmitted to the Party. To deviate from the latter, in word or in act even if not in intention, is to be guilty of the ultimate error.

The Old Bolshevik who has succumbed in the battle of the factions is not incapable of subscribing to this reasoning. He may continue to think that collectivisation might have been accomplished otherwise, but he has no longer a platform or a point of reference. Any discrimination between the Party and its present leadership is henceforth impossible. Short of revising his

whole system of thought—the 'chain of identifications' which goes from socialism to Stalin via the proletariat and the Party—he must accept the verdict of history which has decided in favour of the man he continues in his heart of hearts to detest. In 'capitulating', he is quite possibly free from the feeling that he is surrendering his dignity or showing weakness. There is no such thing as conscience or divine justice, there is no history without revolution, or revolution except through the proletariat armed by the Party, and there is no longer any party outside the Stalinist leadership. In abjuring his opposition, does not the revolutionary, deep down, remain faithful to his past?

This subtle interpretation, on which innumerable variations are possible, is in the long run common both to 'Churchmen' and 'faithful'. In what way, then, can these two groups be distinguished one from the other? I can see three major differences.

1. The orthodox Communist usually knows quite well that the facts are invented, but he never has the right to acknowledge this publicly. He submits, and *must* submit, to a linguistic discipline. The idealist reserves the right to describe the trials as 'verbal ceremonies' and to say more or less plainly that the facts exist only in the phrases of the indictments and the confessions. This difference has a general significance. Deep down inside himself, the orthodox Communist knows all about the concentration camps; in words, he knows no more than re-education camps. One might also say that the one has knowledge of the facts only when clothed in the vocabulary of the doctrine, while the other has knowledge of the naked facts.

2. The orthodox Communist has no more certainty than the idealist about the details of events. He subscribes in a rather hollow way to the disappearance of Trotsky from the annals of the Revolution. He has no doubts about the 'broad lines' of the historical interpretation taught him by the Party. These 'broad lines' are more or less precise and fully developed according to the intelligence and calibre of each individual militant. But they always comprise the same basic elements: the role of the proletariat and its embodiment in the Party, the class struggle, the contradictions of capitalism, the phase of imperialism, and the inevitable outcome, the classless society. (Each of these elements lends itself to infinite variations.) The history of the Russian Bolshevik Party and of its sister parties is authentically the sacred history. The Party eventually reconstructs the episodes of the past to make their meaning clearer to the laity or because it has belatedly grasped their

true meaning. Fundamentally, the history told by the Party is true, and its truth is superior to the material truth of the facts.

The idealist would like this history to be true, but he is not convinced of it. He gives the Soviet Union the benefit of the doubt because it bases itself on the doctrine which alone would give history a meaning. Since he permits himself to face the facts as they are, he can see that some of them do not come up to his expectations. He can see no future for humanity if the Party lies, but he does not draw from this feeling the certainty that the Party tells the truth. Perhaps, he will say, there is no truth in history.

In other words, the doubts of the orthodox Communist relate to details, while those of the idealist also relate to essentials.

3. The orthodox Communist tends to enlarge as much as possible the object of his faith, to add all kinds of incidents and accidents to the broad lines of the adventure. He would like individual initiatives, group actions, the vicissitudes of battle, all to be related to the dialectic of classes and economic forces, he would like everything that happens to take its place in the sacred history whose centre is the Party. The enemies of the Party, within and without, must be seen to act from motives which conform to the logic of the unique and global struggle. Chance must disappear, and Slansky, for example, must be seen to have been doomed to treason by his bourgeois origins.

The idealist implicitly acknowledges the disparity between the 'broad lines' of history and the hazard of events. In the last analysis, one *must* believe that history will end well, otherwise one is at the mercy of a 'senseless tumult'. In the meantime, until the realisation of this happy outcome, man risks being led into temptation by circumstances. What is the correct line at any given moment? No-one could say with certainty, and the decision taken today in all good faith, the future may transform into a crime. But intentions are unimportant: tomorrow I shall be defenceless against a judgment passed by History.

The dogmatism, whether sincere or verbalistic, of the orthodox Communist threatens the non-Communist as well as the deviationist or the renegade. If the 'Churchman' possesses universal truth, there is nothing to prevent him from forcing the pagan to profess the new faith. This process takes the form of an autobiography, written by the unbeliever in terms of the categories and the vocabulary of the believer (since the doctrine denies the existence of the spiritual life, the confession is exclusively concerned with

actual conduct). Thus the American engineer Voegeler, in the prisons of Budapest, recounts his past in the same way as the Jesuit fathers in the prisons of China. Each must re-think his existence according to the categories of his jailer, and this suffices to prove his guilt. So that there shall not be the slightest doubt about this guilt, they are made to add facts which are pure inventions: the engineer confesses to having met a colonel in the American Secret Service before leaving the United States, the priests admit to having taken part in imperialist plots, the Sisters of Charity will be persuaded that they have 'murdered the children of Chinese proletarians'.

The idealist does not push the logic of the system to such grotesquely horrible lengths. And yet the thesis of the idealist, as presented by M. Merleau-Ponty in *Humanisme et Terreur,* seemed to those who read it even more unacceptable than that of the orthodox Communist. Although most of the critics only half understood the philosopher's argument, their indignation (in a purely intellectual sense) seems to me entirely justified.

Revolutionary 'Justice'

It is always astonishing that a thinker should appear indulgent to a society which would not tolerate him and merciless to the one which honours him. The praise of fanaticism by a non-fanatic, a philosophy of 'commitment' which restricts itself to interpreting the commitment of others and does not commit itself, leaves a strangely discordant impression. Only a liberal society would tolerate an analysis of the trials such as that produced by M. Merleau-Ponty, after Victor Serge and Koestler: the indifference he displays in regard to liberalism, if it does not derive from the sublime precepts of Christ, certainly constitutes a form of self-denial. People always mistrust those who affect not to believe in the value of what they do. Why does this philosopher reason as if liberty, in the absence of which he would be condemned to silence or obedience, were worth nothing?

The whole interpretation of the historical process which M. Merleau-Ponty calls Marxist, and which offers the hope of a radical solution, hangs on a certain theory of the proletariat. But this theory of the proletariat, in itself an abstraction, is invoked on behalf of revolutions in pre-capitalist countries where the proletariat constituted only a small minority of the population. Why should the Chinese Revolution, carried out by intellectuals mobilising the peasant masses, offer the promise, half realised in the present-day proletariat of the West, of a 'humane coexistence'?

Comparisons between the two kinds of régime appear to be conducted with unintentional dishonesty. On principle, as we have seen, on the pretext that it tends towards a 'radical solution', the Soviet régime is treated with a certain indulgence. The attitude symbolised by the formula "one law for *one's* friends and another for one's foes", which is difficult enough to accept even if one is sure that one of the two camps will one day attain the truth, becomes quite untenable when there is any hesitation in acknowledging the fidelity of the Soviet State to its revolutionary vocation. It is right to recall the facts of violence which stand out as landmarks in the history of the West as in that of every known society, but it is surely only fair to compare the methods of coercion at present used or essentially implied by each kind of régime. What liberties do Soviet and Western citizens respectively possess? What guarantees are conceded to accused persons on this side of the Iron Curtain and on that?

If the suppression of liberties is justified by other merits of the Soviet régime, for example the rapidity of economic progress, this must be said and demonstrated. In fact, our philosopher is content with a facile reasoning, according to which all societies involve injustices and violence, and if the Soviet society includes at present an extra measure, the grandeur of the aim forbids one to condemn it. It *is* certainly true that one can and must forgive a revolution crimes which one would not excuse if they were committed by stabilised régimes, but how long does the excuse of revolution remain valid? If, thirty years after the seizure of power, the law which allows arrest on suspicion *à la* Robespierre continues to apply, when will it fall into disuse? If terrorism is prolonged over several decades this raises, at the very least, the question to what extent terrorism is linked, not only to the Revolution itself, but to the social order which has resulted from it.

The method of the 'chain of identifications' by which opposition can become treason entails an indefinite reign of terror. M. Merleau-Ponty devotes several pages to explaining what Victor Serge and Koestler had already explained and which is in no way mysterious: that the oppositionist acts in certain circumstances like an enemy of the Party and in consequence appears, in the eyes of the Party leaders, a traitor to the cause. But this assimilation of the oppositionist to the traitor must in the long run preclude any opposition. A man like Georges Clemenceau weakens the governments which he criticises, but once he is in power he wages war until victory is achieved. The Bolsheviks have always had two slogans, one which insisted on

monolithism, the other which encouraged conflicts of ideas and tendencies to sustain the vigour of the Party (Lenin was always ready to use the second formula when there was a risk of his being overborne by the majority). When should each be applied? In 1917 neither Stalin who, before the arrival of Lenin, had adopted an attitude of moderation, nor Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had been opposed to the October *coup d'état,* were accused of treason, then or later. They were not obliged to confess that they had been in the pay of Kerensky or the allies. The system of the 'chain of identifications' does not reach its absurd and logical end until the moment when internal disagreements have disappeared or have at least been buried in the labyrinths of the bureaucracy, when a small group or perhaps a single man, master of the Party, of the police, of the State, arbitrarily disposes of the lives and the honour of millions of men.

Whatever our philosopher may have thought, what aroused so much indignation was not that he had expressed in phenomenologico-existentialist language the old formulas of the revolutionary or terrorist sects—whoever is not with me is against me: all opposition is treason: the slightest deviation leads one into the enemy camp—but that he appeared to find the prolonging of this terrorism quite normal at a time when the system of thought monopolised by the holders of power has succeeded in crushing the vanquished and exalting the victors. When the man who interprets History is at once Secretary-General of the Party and Chief of Police, the virtue, the glamour, the hazards of battle are eliminated. The powerful want more than power; they want to be also the heralds of the truth. In place of revolutionary terror, a papal-imperial authority has established itself: in this soulless religion, oppositionists become in actual fact heretics, worse than criminals.

We can admit that in a revolutionary period the accused may be refused the guarantees accorded to them during normal times. We can understand why Robespierre eliminates Danton, before being eliminated himself, and why in both cases the special tribunals acknowledge the will of a faction. The putting into juridical form of decisions taken without regard to legal processes seems to meet a fundamental need to maintain an appearance of legal continuity through revolutionary upheavals. The tribunals set up after the Liberation were obliged to ignore the fact that the Vichy Government was legal and probably legitimate. In order that the Supreme Court might consider itself entitled to try Marshal Pétain, it had to demolish retrospectively the legality of the Vichy régime and to re-think and re-examine the actions of the Marshal in the light of the juridico-historic system of victorious Gaullism.

Any given distribution of wealth and power is necessarily underwritten by a set of laws, but it does not follow that bourgeoise justice is bound up with capitalism and is compromised by the latter's iniquities. What M. Merleau-Ponty calls bourgeois justice is justice as it has been elaborated over the centuries, with a strict definition of offences, the right of suspects to defend themselves, the non-retroactivity of laws. When liberal forms of justice disappear, the essence of justice goes: revolutionary justice is no more than a caricature of justice. It might perhaps be admitted that in certain cases special tribunals are inevitable, but procedures adopted in exceptional circumstances should not be presented as though they were a new kind of justice when in fact they are the complete negation of all justice.

If the established State avails itself of revolutionary justice, then there is no longer any security for anyone and the dialectic of the confessions leads inevitably to the great purges, with millions of suspects confessing to imaginary crimes. Revolution and terror are not incompatible with humanist aims; the permanent revolution, which is terrorism erected into a system of government, is. The aim of Communist violence becomes submerged in the organic, unchanging, totalitarian miasma produced by violence in the service, not of the proletarians, but of the men of the Party—that is to say the privileged.

This way of thought, which is that of the orthodox Communist as well as that of the idealists, ends up by ratifying the verdict of History. If one imagines Trotsky in the place of Stalin, the roles of traitor and judge are reversed. Inside the Party, events alone decide between rivals. The victor is convinced he is right—agreed—but why should a philosopher subscribe to this claim? While subscribing to the same general view of history, would it not have been possible to collectivise agriculture without all the deportations and famines? The man who in 1929 foresaw the inevitable consequences, which were later confirmed by events, of the methods about to be applied by the Party leadership, is not refuted by the final success of the operation, unless one proclaims once and for all that the human cost of 'success' is of no importance.

Many different interpretations of human conduct are possible at any given moment, according to whether one refers oneself to the intentions of the protagonists, to the circumstances obtaining at the time, or to the consequences of their actions. And even if, as one has the right to in politics, one refuses to take intentions into account, it will still be possible to find several different interpretations of any historical action, whether one projects

oneself back to the moment of the decision or, on the contrary, interprets it on the basis of remote consequences which have meanwhile been achieved. The great man is the man who can stand up to the scrutiny of the future he did not know. But the historian would be guilty of violating the ethics of his profession if he retraced indefinitely the course of the centuries. The achievement of Bismarck is not condemned by the tragedy of the Third Reich.

A fortiori, this method of evaluation becomes outrageous if a tribunal of living men resorts to it against contemporaries. Interpretation by results from the viewpoint of the victor must lead to the worst injustices: all error would become retrospectively treason. Nothing is more false: the moral or juridical classification of an act is not modified by the subsequent course of events. The merits or demerits of the men who chose armistice in 1940 cannot be separated from their motives. But if one disregards intentions, one must consider the advantages and the risks of an armistice, and the advantages and risks of the opposite decision, *such as they appeared in 1940.* The man who estimated that an armistice gave France a better chance of survival, without damaging the Allied cause, may have been wrong. His error is not transformed into treason by the Allied victory. The man who wanted an armistice in order to spare his country useless suffering, or to prepare for a resumption of the struggle, was not a traitor and never could become one. The man who wanted an armistice in order to make France change sides was a traitor from that very moment, in relation to the France of 1939 as well as that of 1945.

If Germany had won, would the Gaullists have been traitors and would the collaborators have laid down the law? It would in fact have been so. The collaborators and the Gaullists had different and incompatible conceptions of what France should be, and the issue between them was in fact to be decided by the battles of others. The event was the judge, and both sides accepted this judge, whose verdict was of course one of fact, not of law: when a mortal struggle is joined, the decision must lie with the sword, not the court of law.

There is always a tendency to interpret the conduct of others from one's own viewpoint: if the 'collaborationist' secretly agreed with the Gaullist, his behaviour was clearly ignoble. To recognise the uncertainly of any given historical situation, the number of different possible decisions, of different possible outlooks on an unknown future, is not to forgive the unforgivable or to avoid unavoidable commitments, but to assume them without hatred, without denying the honour of one's adversary.

Both orthodox Communists and left-wing idealists begin by detaching the act from the actor, from his motives and intentions and from the circumstances surrounding the act; they then fit it into their own interpretation of events. And since they postulate the absolute value of *their* objective, their condemnation of the others, of the vanquished, is quite unreserved. Honesty should compel one to go back to the moment of the decision and examine the circumstances surrounding it. If one does this, one's interpretation will be less arbitrary; to admit that the end could not be known, that contradictory causes can each be partially legitimate, must take the edge off a dogmatism which sets itself up as the arbiter of the truth.

Anyone who claims to formulate a definitive verdict is a charlatan. Either History is the ultimate tribunal and it will not pronounce sentence until the day of judgment; or conscience (or God) is the judge of History and the future has no more authority than the present.

Thirty years ago, the dominant school of thought in the Soviet Union undertook, in the name of Marxism, the task of analysing the infrastructure of society, the development of productive forces and of class warfare. It paid no heed to heroes and battles: it explained everything in terms of deep, impersonal, inexorable forces. Since then nations, wars, generals have been reintroduced. In a sense, this was a healthy reaction. The integral resurrection of the past cannot ignore the determinism of the machine, or the actions of individuals, the juxtaposition of chains of events or the clash of armies. But the picture of events in the Communist interpretation of History offers us a strange universe where everything is explained with an implacable and unreal logic.

In a history dominated by the determinism of the forces and relations of production, of the class struggle, and of national and imperialist ambitions, the detail of events must still find a place. Each individual must be given a role which conforms to his social position, each episode must be transformed into an expression of a conflict or a necessity foreseen by the doctrine. Nothing is accidental, everything has its significance. Capitalism and socialism cease to appear as abstractions. They become embodied in parties, individuals, bureaucracies. Western missionaries in China are agents of imperialism. Men are what they do. The meaning of their acts appears in the version provided by the dispenser of the truth. One cannot do wrong involuntarily, one might say, reversing the Socratic formula; not because the intentions of the non-Communists are perverse but because they do not

count. Only the socialist who knows the future understands the meaning of what the capitalist does and realises that, *objectively,* he intends the evil which, however unwittingly, he causes. So finally there is no reason why the guilty should not be accused of actions which illustrate the authentic essence of their conduct: terrorism or sabotage.

Having started from the Hegelian dialectic, one ends up with penny dreadfuls—a combination by no means displeasing to intellectuals, even some of the greatest. Chance and the unintelligible irritate them. The Communist interpretation never fails. In vain will logicians remind them that a theory which eludes refutation is outside the category of truth.

CHAPTER V

THE MEANING OF HISTORY

TWO errors, apparently contradictory but in fact connected, lie at the origin of the idolatry of History. 'Churchmen' and 'faithful' both allow themselves to fall into the trap of absolutism, and then proceed to indulge in a limitless relativism.

They conjure up for themselves an imaginary moment in history, which one group christens 'the classless society', the other 'the mutual recognition of man and man'. Neither has any doubt as to the absolute finality, the unconditional validity, the radical originality of this moment to come, in relation to everything that has preceded it. This 'privileged state' will give a meaning to the whole. Assured of knowing in advance the secret of the unfinished historical adventure, they observe the confusion of the events of yesterday and today with the pomposity of the judge who looks down on the quarrels of others and dispenses praise and blame with autocratic impartiality.

Historical existence, as authentically experienced, brings into conflict individuals, groups and nations for the defence of incompatible interests or ideas. Neither the contemporary nor the historian is in a position to decide unreservedly for or against one or the other. Not that we are incapable of distinguishing good from evil, but we do not know the future and every historical cause carries its share of iniquities.

All crusaders transfigure the cause for which they risk their lives, and they have the right to ignore the ambiguities of our human condition. But the doctrinaires who try to justify this transfiguration at the same time justify, willy-nilly, the ravings of fanaticism and of terror. The socialist crusader interprets the conduct of others according to his own idea of History and, by the same token, can find no adversaries worthy of him: only reactionaries or cynics would oppose the future which he represents. Because he proclaims the universal truth of a single view of History, he reserves the right to interpret the past as he pleases.

The twin errors of absolutism and of relativism are both refuted by a logic of the retrospective knowledge and understanding of human facts. The

historian, the sociologist or the jurist can bring out the *meanings* of actions, institutions and laws. They cannot discover *the* meaning of the whole. History is not absurd, but no living being can grasp its one, final meaning.

Plurality of Meanings

Human actions are always intelligible. When they cease to be so, their authors are put outside the pale of humanity, they are regarded as lunatics, strangers to the species. But intelligibility does not come under a single heading and does not guarantee that the whole, each single element of which is in itself intelligible, makes sense to the observer.

Why did Caesar cross the Rubicon? Why did Napoleon withdraw his right wing at the battle of Austerlitz? Why did Hitler invade Russia in 1941? Why did the speculator sell francs after the 1936 election? Why did the Soviet Government decide on the collectivisation of agriculture in 1930? In each of these cases, the answer is given by relating the decision to the aim envisaged: to seize power in Rome, to lure the left wing of the Austro-Russian army, to destroy the Soviet régime, to make a profit out of a devaluation, to destroy the kulaks and to increase the proportion of crops available for the market. Caesar aspired to dictatorship or royalty, Napoleon or Hitler to victory; the speculator wanted to accumulate financial profits and the Russian Government food stocks to supply the towns. But this last example shows the inadequacy of the means-end relationship. One can say, at a pinch, 'a single aim: victory' or 'a single aim: profit'. The planner must always choose between a diversity of aims: the highest possible production might perhaps in the short run have been provided by peasant owners, but the latter would have constituted a class hostile to the Soviet régime and consumed an important part of the harvest.

Even when the end is determined, historical interpretation is never exclusively confined to a consideration of the means. How can one understand the conduct of a war leader if one does not interpret each of his decisions in the light of the knowledge at his disposal, the presumed reactions of the enemy, a calculation of their respective chances—if one does not examine the organisation of their armies and their techniques of warfare? When one passes from the art of warfare to that of politics, the complexity increases. The decision of the politician, like that of the soldier, can only be understood if one has analysed all the contingencies: Caesar's, Napoleon's, or Hitler's

decision reveals its significance only in a context which covers a whole epoch, a whole nation, perhaps a whole civilisation.

The inquiry can be undertaken in three directions, or it might be said to comprise three dimensions:

1. The determination of means and ends sends one back to the knowledge at the disposal of the protagonist and to the structure of his society. One goal achieved is never more than a step towards an ulterior objective. Even if power were the sole aim in politics, it would still be necessary to ascertain the kind of power to which the ambitious politician aspires. The technique of attaining power in a parliamentary régime has little in common with the one likely to be most effective in a totalitarian régime. The ambitions of Caesar, Napoleon or Hitler, each of which has its own special characteristics, are explicable only in and through the crises of the Roman Republic, the French Revolution and the Weimar Republic.

2. The determination of values is essential to the understanding of human conduct, because the latter is never strictly utilitarian. The rational calculations of speculators represent an activity, more or less widespread in different civilisations, which is always limited by a conception of the good life. The warrior and the worker, *homo politicus* and *homo œconomicus,* are bound alike by religious, moral or customary beliefs; their actions express a scale of preferences. A social régime is always the reflection of an attitude towards the cosmos, the commonwealth or God. No society has ever reduced values to a common denominator—wealth or power. The prestige of men or of professions has never been measured exclusively by money.

3. We consider it pointless to speculate on the factors that determined Napoleon's behaviour at Austerlitz, but the same Napoleon's defeats at Moscow or Waterloo are often attributed to fatigue or illness. When one observes the failure of an individual, or a series of actions by a historical personality, or the conduct of a group, one is inclined to dismiss the notion of voluntary attitudes or actions in favour of a belief in compulsive forces arising from education and environment.

Of these three dimensions, the historian is more preoccupied with the first, the sociologist with the second and the cultural anthropologist with the third, but each of these specialists depends on the others. The historian must try to free himself from his own preconceptions, and, so to speak, get under the skin of his subject. But this presupposes a certain community between the

historian and the historical object. If the universe in which the men of the past lived and had their being had nothing in common with mine, if these two universes did not appear, on a certain level of abstraction, as variations on a similar theme, the other's universe would become radically foreign to me and would lose all meaning. For history as a whole to be intelligible to me, the living must be able to trace some kinship with the dead. The search for a meaning, at this stage of the analysis, is tantamount to determining the abstract constituents of the human community— compulsions, categories, typical situations, symbols or values— which produce the conditions necessary to an understanding of actions by those who witnessed them, and of past civilisations by the historians.

That there should be several dimensions open to the would be interpreter of the past does not mean that understanding is impossible; what it suggests is the richness of reality. In a certain sense, each and every fragment of history is inexhaustible. 'Each man carries in himself the whole structure of the human condition'. Perhaps a single society, providing it was totally understood, might reveal the essence of all societies. The exhaustive analysis of a single war campaign might permit a genius to establish the perennial rules of strategy, the study of a single political entity to discover the principles common to all constitutions. But it is doubtful; after all, one never plumbs the mystery even of one's nearest and dearest.

There is also a plurality within each of these human dimensions: the placing of events is an essential step towards historical understanding, but neither the elements nor the whole provide any defined limits within which it can operate. The meaning, therefore, is ambiguous, elusive and different according to the 'whole' which one is considering.

The decision taken by Hitler at the end of 1940 to attack the Soviet Union can be explained by a strategic conception —to conquer the Red Army before Great Britain was in a position to make a landing in the West—and a political intention—to destroy the Bolshevik régime, to reduce the Slavs to the status of an inferior people, etc. This intention in its turn sends one back to Hitler's intellectual training, to the literature he had superficially studied concerning the vicissitudes of the age-long conflict between Slavs and Teutons. From a single act one is carried back willy-nilly over the whole course of European history—from the Franco-German war of 1939 to the Treaty of Verdun, from the Carolingian Empire to the Gallo-Roman kingdoms, from these to the Roman Empire, and so on.

Nor is it possible to grasp a historical atom through documents or by direct experience. Each one of the thousands or millions of men engaged in a battle lives through it in a different way. The text of a treaty is, physically, a single thing. In its meaning it is manifold: for those who draft it, it is not the same as for those who apply it; it is different again, perhaps, for the enemy who signs it with contradictory mental reservations. A conglomeration of meanings, it acquires a unity, like the battle, only in the mind which rethinks it, the mind of a historian or of a historical personality.

This indefinite, two-fold, regression does not imply that the matter under discussion was originally formless. The historian does not merely accumulate specks of dust. The element and the whole are complementary. Nothing could be more erroneous than to imagine that the one is matter and the other form, the first a datum, the second a construct. The battle of Austerlitz is a 'whole' in relation to the action of a grenadier or to the charge of the cavalry in the centre of the battlefield; it is an event in relation to the campaign of 1805, just as the latter is an event in relation to the Napoleonic wars.

There is no fundamental difference between the battle of Austerlitz, the campaign of 1805 and the Napoleonic wars. But, it will be pointed out, the battle of Austerlitz can be taken in at a single glance, it *has* been taken in by a single man, but not the campaign of 1805 or the Napoleonic wars. If this were the case, the battle of the Marne would belong to the same category as the campaign of 1805 rather than to that of the battle of Austerlitz. In fact, every event involves duration and range, in exactly the same way as a whole complex of events. For there to be any essential antithesis, the event would have to be instantaneous or individual. And this is not so.

This homogeneity of historical reconstructions does not exclude differences which appear striking when one observes the limits to which they can extend. As a complex of events grows larger, the less clear become its outlines, the less obvious its internal unity. The spatio-temporal unity of the battle of Austerlitz, the interconnection between the various actions subsumed under this title, were evident to contemporaries and remain so to the historian. On a higher level, this unity was not grasped by those who lived through the event; the link between the various elements is indirect, ambiguous. With the widening of the gap between men's experiences and their reconstruction by the historian, the risk of arbitrary judgment increases.

Individual behaviour within armies is determined by the system of organisation and discipline and, ultimately, by the plan of the commander.

Individual behaviour on the field of battle is the result of the clash between opposing aims— the aims of the commanders who determine global movements, the aims of the combatants, each of whom wants to kill the other. The first type of behaviour is explained by reference to a set of rules or laws which are themselves determined by beliefs or pragmatic necessities. The second type of behaviour does not only cover the clash of swords or the exchange of shells. It belongs to the category of accidental encounters, but it is also, in certain respects, 'ordained'. A battle is rarely independent of all convention; organisation, however strict, always leaves room for rivalries. A constitution fixes the method by which rulers and legislators are chosen. It incites competition between individuals and groups for the distribution of places or functions; it strives to forestall violence by imposing rules.

The essential distinction is between ideal entities and real entities rather than between categories of behaviour. The entity formed by a constitution or a doctrine is ideal, the entity created by the men who govern themselves according to this constitution or who live according to this doctrine is real. The historian or the sociologist directs himself sometimes to the specific meaning of a text in the ideal system of the constitution or the doctrine, sometimes to the meaning as experienced by the individual consciousness. The jurist or the philosopher tends towards the apprehension of history and its works in their specific meaning, the historian according to their psychic or social manifestations.

These two interpretations are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive. The link between the stages of a philosophical deduction or of a juridical argument is by definition incompatible with the relationship established by the psychologist or the sociologist. It reveals its meaning only to those who are prepared to penetrate the universe of the meta-physician or the jurist.

Specific meanings have been experienced by men in a given epoch in societies which adhered to certain beliefs. No philosopher has ever been a 'pure spirit', completely detached from his own time and his own country. Critical reflection should not be allowed to restrict in advance the rights of historical or sociological interpretation, without pointing out the fundamental incongruity between specific meanings and 'experienced' meanings. By its very essence, the study of origins cannot arrive at the strictly philosophical meaning or the strictly artistic quality of a creation. The state of societies explains the manifold characteristics of different creations, never the secret of the masterpiece.

The plurality of meaning which results from the indefiniteness of historical entities and the distinction between 'specific' meanings and 'experienced' meanings involves the *renewal* of historical interpretation; it offers at once a protection against the worst form of relativism; that which is combined with dogmatism. Specific meanings are first of all ignored, efforts are made to reduce philosophical works to the meaning they assume in the consciousness of the non-philosopher, 'experienced' meanings are interpreted on the basis of what is known as a dominant fact, such as the class struggle, and, finally, a single meaning, decreed by the historian, is given to the world of man, reduced to a single dimension. The multiplicity of historical entities, real and ideal, should preclude the fanaticism which refuses to recognise the diversity of roles played by individuals in a complex society, the interlacing of the systems within which human activity revolves. Historical reconstruction must inevitably retain an unfinished character, because it never succeeds in unravelling all relationships or exhausting all possible meanings.

This renewal of interpretation involves a sort of relativity: the curiosity of the interpreter affects the determining of historical entities and specific meanings. The nature of this relativity is different according to whether it is events or institutions that are in question. Events in relation to their authors are eternally what they were, even if the progress of sociological knowledge, the enriching of categories or a widened experience permit a new understanding of them. The relativity of specific meanings depends on the nature of the relationship between the creations of history, in other words, the historicity proper to each spiritual universe. It is by reaching beyond this multiplicity, but without destroying it, that unity of meaning will eventually reveal itself.

Historical Units

"A philosophy of History presupposes that human history is not a simple sum of juxtaposed facts—individual decisions and adventures, ideas, interests, institutions—but that it is, instantaneously and sequentially, a totality moving towards a privileged state which will give meaning to the whole."* History is certainly not a 'simple sum of juxtaposed facts'; is it an 'instantaneous totality'? The elements of a society are interdependent; they influence one another reciprocally; but they do not constitute a totality.

The separation between economic, political and religious facts is introduced by the concepts of the scientist or the necessity for the division of

labour. What first strikes the unprejudiced observer is their interdependence. The historian begins not by juxtaposition or by totality, but by the intermingling of entities and relationships. Tools, the organisation of labour, the juridical forms of ownership or of exchange, the institutions which belong to economic history, on the one side touch on science, which has slowly emerged from philosophy and religion, and on the other side the State, which guarantees the laws. The man who buys and sells, cultivates the soil, handles machines, remains, at bottom, the man who believes, thinks and prays. Through the interdependence of the different sectors of human activity, which entails collaboration between the different disciplines, one may discern a sort of unity on the horizon of scientific labour. It is doubtful whether, even in primitive societies, one will succeed in bringing to light a single principle from which every possible way of living and thinking could be said to derive. (The same doubt remains when it comes to a single human existence.) Complex societies appear at once coherent and multifarious; no single part of them is isolated, no historical entity constitutes a totality of meaning unambiguously defined.

How is it possible to transcend the unity of interdependence? There is the hypothesis according to which one sector of reality or one human activity could be said to *determine* the other sectors and other activities—the relations of production constituting the substructure on which political and ideological institutions are based.

On the level of the theory of knowledge, such a hypothesis would-be unthinkable if it implied that economics *determined* politics or ideas without being influenced by them in return. It would, so to speak, be contradictory, or in any case incompatible with straightforward observation. Economic facts cannot be isolated as such, either materially or conceptually. They embody the means of production, and therefore science and technology, the relations of production, that is to say the organisation of labour, property laws, class distinctions (which are also controlled by the size of the population and by the modalities of hierarchy and prestige). The interaction of the elements inside the economic fact makes it impossible to conceive of the latter being able to determine without being partially determined itself. The interdependence of the social sectors or of human activities is incontrovertible.

* Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.,* pp. 165, 166.

It is therefore impossible to attach any philosophical significance to the distinction between substructure and superstructure. Where is the precise frontier between them? It may perhaps be convenient, in the study of societies, to take the organisation of labour rather than religious beliefs as one's point of departure. But how can it be affirmed *a priori* or *a posteriori* that a man's view of the world is determined by the form of his labour, but that the latter is not affected by the idea of the world which man has formed for himself?

In order to survive, the individual or the group must struggle against Nature and draw their livelihood from it. By virtue of this, the economic function acquires a sort of priority. But since even the most primitive societies never fulfil this function without organising themselves in the light of beliefs which cannot be judged in terms of efficiency, this priority does not amount to a unilateral causality or a *primum movens.*

What is the empirical significance of this priority? What are the traits common to societies which have reached a certain economico-technical maturity? What are the differences between societies anterior to and those subsequent to the discovery of the steam engine, electricity or atomic energy? Such queries belong to the realm of sociology, not philosophy.

It may not be impossible to explain social types in terms of the available means of production. Specialists in proto-history or pre-history are only too ready to subscribe to a conception of this kind, since they classify periods and groups according to the tools employed and the principal forms of activity. As regards complex societies, all one could do would be to establish the inevitable consequences of a given state of technology and then trace the framework within which political and ideological variations play their part.

In any case, there is no proof that the economic factor predominates during every period of history. Max Scheler has suggested that the primacy of blood, the primacy of power, the primacy of economics characterise the three great periods of human history. The bonds of blood cemented small, confined communities, before the advent of nations and empires. Granted that the means of production remain more or less constant, events are mainly controlled by politics. Power raises up or casts down States; it dictates the chronicle of blood and glory in which warriors take pride of place. In the modern age, economic considerations have become decisive because technology, perpetually changing and developing, is the measure of the wealth of individuals and groups.

Such propositions do not constitute philosophical truths, but merely hypothetical generalisations. They are not incompatible with the idea that the volume of collective resources determines the limits of possible variations in social organisation.

Theories relating to the efficacy of the various elements in history lead only to rather vague formulae, rarely proved and never capable of exhausting the complexity of relationships.

No single type of phenomenon can be charged with responsibility either for changes in or for the existing state of the social structure. No-one could state categorically that the invention of electrical or electronic machines or the harnessing of atomic energy may not have an influence even on literature or painting. But neither could anyone affirm that the *essentials* of literature, painting or political institutions are *determined* by technology, by the property laws or by the relations between the classes. Limits cannot be pre-imposed on the possible effects of a cause, not because the latter is exclusive or irresistible but because everything is intermingled: a society expresses itself in its literature as well as in its productivity; the microcosm reflects the whole. But the whole will only be grasped by reference to a multiplicity of viewpoints as long as man refuses to be defined entirely by a single question, as long as societies are not planned in accordance with a global system.

Thus the historian, unlike the sociologist or the philosopher, seeks unity not so much in a privileged cause as in the singularity of the historical unit—epoch, nation or culture. What are the historical units? Can one grasp unity through time and the individuality of the unit?

No-one denies the reality of the European nations in the twentieth century. But this reality is ambiguous. The homogeneity of language and culture in Great Britain, France or Spain is far from being complete. Many nationalities, defined by a language, a way of life or a culture, do not possess, in the middle of the twentieth century, a State which is their own exclusive property. In the national States which are sovereign in their rights, the life of the citizen and the decisions of his rulers are influenced by external events. To borrow a phrase of Arnold Toynbee's, the nation does not constitute an intelligible field of study. The development of France cannot be separated from that of England or Germany; it is not the expression of a unique soul, or at least the latter reveals itself gradually and progressively through cultural and economic exchanges. In abstract terms there are three questions to be considered in connection with historical entities—relating to their degree of

independence, of *coherence* and of *originality.* The last two questions chiefly concern entities of the national type; the first has a decisive significance when it comes to Toynbee's 'intelligible fields'.

To these three questions Oswald Spengler gives a positive answer. According to him, every culture is comparable to an organism which develops according to its own inner laws and proceeds inexorably towards its end, closed in on itself, incapable of receiving anything from outside which might modify its essence; each, from its birth until its death, expresses a 'soul' which is incomparable with any other. These affirmations far transcend the facts. The assimilation of cultures to an organism, unless it can be reduced to a vague comparison, derives from a false metaphysic. To stress the originality, in every culture, of the sciences, even the mathematical sciences, and to disregard completely the accumulation or the progress of knowledge, is simply to ignore self-evident facts. The denial of the influence that cultures exercise on one another is quite arbitrary, seeing that exchanges of machines, ideas and institutions are incontestable. Taken literally, Spengler's central thesis is self-contradictory.

Arnold Toynbee's replies to the three questions express slight differences of emphasis and meaning. At the beginning of the *Study of History,* civilisations are presented as intelligible fields of study, but not nations. As the book progresses, the contacts between civilisations reveal themselves in such a way that finally the distinction between nations and civilisations, at least as regards autonomy of development, seems to be one of degree rather than kind. The internal coherence of civilisations is stated rather than proved. Toynbee continually tells us that the various elements in a civilisation harmonise with one another and that one element could not be modified without affecting the others. But he shows their interdependence rather than their harmony. At any given period, a civilisation retains elements borrowed from the past and not contemporaneous with the spirit of the time. A civilisation accumulates institutions or creations begotten by others. Where, for example, is the frontier between the civilisation of the ancients and that of Western or Eastern Christianity? What are the links between Christianity and the age of technology?

Toynbee has some difficulty in establishing the internal coherence of civilisations, because he does not express himself clearly on the singularity of each civilisation. What in fact is the basis of, what defines the originality of a civilisation? According to Toynbee, the answer would be religion. But in certain cases it is difficult to discern this special religion: what transcendent

beliefs were exclusive to Japan, making it different from China? When one does see it clearly, for example in the case of the two European civilisations of Western and Eastern Christianity, Toynbee never manages to establish the peculiar essence of the faith and to infer therefrom the special characteristics of the historical entity. One does not know whether the apparent primacy of religion is causal or whether it simply reflects the hierarchy of values established by the interpreter among the various human activities. When, in the last volume of his book, Toynbee presages an eventual fusion of civilisations and a universal Church, the disciple of Spengler transforms himself into the great-grandson of Bossuet.

Once one has discarded the two metaphysical postulates of Spengler—the organicist metaphysic of cultures and the dogmatic negation of the universality of spirit and truth—there remains no further obstacle on the path to human unity. Autonomy of development, internal cohesion and the originality of civilisations subsist, outlined in reality, but not to the point of revealing a universal meaning. Civilisations do not differ in kind from other historical entities; they are more autonomous and probably less coherent than smaller entities—more than a juxtaposition and less than a totality.

This negative conclusion tallies with a proposition which might have been directly affirmed. History, like individual existence, presents no empirically observable unity, either real or significant. The actions of the individual are dovetailed into innumerable entities. Our thoughts, far from being self-contained, reflect the heritage of the centuries. Something unique and irreplaceable, easier to grasp intuitively than to define, is discernible from one end of a human existence to the other. Biographies, by relating events to the person involved, suggest the relative constancy of a character or, in more neutral terms, of a way of reacting, and create an aesthetic impression of unity, just as psychologists or psycho-analysts suggest the ambiguous unity of a human destiny which is created as much as it is endured by each individual. That the little bourgeois of Aix was also the painter Cézanne is an incontrovertible fact; the unity of the man and the artist is not illusory, but it is almost undecipherable.

The elements of a collective history are related to one another in the same way as the episodes in an individual destiny, though to a lesser degree. One understands a society on the basis of its infrastructure: from the organisation of labour to the edifice of beliefs, the process of understanding may not meet with any insurmountable obstacles, but neither does it reveal, from one stage to the next, any essential sequence.

In other words, unity of meaning cannot be conceived without determining the values or the hierarchy of human activities. Marxists who imagine that the 'economic factor' is the unifying force are mixing up a causal primacy and a primacy of interest; implicitly they invoke the latter whenever one shows them the limitations of the former. Spengler imagines this unity of meaning, but he can only give it verisimilitude by means of a biological metaphysic. And Toynbee aims to find the equivalent of the Spenglerian doctrine through the path of empiricism, but in fact the autonomy, the coherence and the originality of civilisations gradually dissolve during the course of his studies. If the history he retraces does retain a certain structure, this is because the historian has gradually given way to the philosopher and the dialectic of empires and churches, the earthly city and the city of God, has taken over the reins of the narrative.

In the eyes of God, every existence does present a unified meaning, because everything, that is to say everything that matters, is brought into play in the dialogue between the creature and the creator, the drama in which the salvation of a soul is at stake. Existential psycho-analysis postulates an analogous unity in the choice each consciousness makes for itself: this unity is not the unity of a single act—the consciousness always remains free to go back on its decision—it is that of the meaning assumed by existence as a whole, re-thought by the observer with reference to a unique problem which is the equivalent, in an atheistic philosophy, of the problem of salvation. The adventure of mankind through time has *one* meaning to the extent that all men are collectively seeking to achieve salvation.

Logic confirms what successive doctrines suggest: philosophies of history are secularised theologies.

The End of History

The social sciences fulfil the first requirement of philosophy: to substitute for the brute facts, for the numberless acts which can be observed directly or through documents, a view of reality defined by a problem which itself constitutes a certain activity—either economic, as with all activities directed against Nature which tend to provide the collectivity with the means of subsistence and to overcome essential poverty, or political, as with all activities which tend to the formation of a collectivity or which aim at organising the lives of men in common and therefore establishing rules of co-operation and command.

Such a distinction is not *real.* Any activity which aims to create or increase the resources of the group involves politics since it demands the co-operation of individuals. In the same way, a political order involves an economic aspect since it distributes goods among the members of the collectivity and adapts itself to a communal method of work.

The formulas which the philosophies of history have made fashionable—the mastery of man over Nature, or the reconciliation of mankind—take one back to the original problems of economics and politics. Defined in political and economic terms, the 'privileged State which gives meaning to the whole' becomes identical with the radical solution to the problem of communal life or with the end of history.

Societies are never rational in the sense in which technology, deduced from science, is rational. 'Culture' gives to social behaviour and institutions—family, work, the distribution of power and prestige—innumerable forms which are bound up with metaphysical beliefs or customs sanctioned by tradition. The distinction between the different types of phenomenon is introduced, in the case of primitive societies, by the philosophy of the observer, but it is virtually there already, since the family is always subject to strict and complex rules, daily habits are never entirely arbitrary, and the hierarchy is always supported by a certain conception of the world.

On the level of *mores,* diversity asserts itself as a fact of experience and it is difficult to see how one could define a 'privileged state'. The multifarious forms of the family do not condemn the idea of a natural law, but they make it necessary to place the latter on such a level of abstraction that the empirically observed diversity will appear normal. The ultimate end of history would be not a new and concrete definition of the family, but a diversity which would not contradict the rules inseparable from man's essential humanity.

Beliefs relating to plants, animals and gods have just as much bearing on the forces and the relations of productions as the structure of the family and the State. The 'privileged state' which would mark the end of the economic adventure would have to be stripped of all 'cultural' traits, of everything that related it to a particular collectivity. In the same way, the universally true faith expresses itself in a historical language and is mixed with accidental elements.

What would this 'privileged state' consist of, and how could it differ from the abstract values which govern institutions but do not represent a

predetermined institutional order?

The new fact which has caused the theological notion of the end of history to be taken up again in a rational context is technological progress. Not all philosophers evoke, after the fashion of Trotsky, the coming reign of plenty when the problem of distribution will have resolved itself, when education and the certainty of the morrow will suffice to curb human greed, but all are bound to consider that the development of science and of the means of production will change one of the essential data of existence: collective wealth will make it possible to give to one without taking away from the other, the poverty of the many will no longer be the condition of the luxury of the few.

The reign of plenty is not unthinkable or absurd. Economic progress, such as we have been able to observe it over the past two or three centuries, can be measured, roughly speaking, by increased productivity. In one hour of work a man produces an increasing quantity of goods. This progress is fastest in the secondary or industrial sector, slowest in the tertiary sector— transport, commerce and services. In the primary sector, it seems destined to slow down after a certain point is reached, at least if one admits that the law of diminishing returns operates in agriculture. The advent of the reign of plenty thus requires a limitation in the size of the population. Assuming a stationary population and an agricultural production which meets every need, total prosperity would still require that all demands for manufactured products were satisfied. Many people will be tempted to reply that these demands are by nature illimitable. But supposing they are wrong and that one can reach a saturation point as regards secondary needs. In this case the notion of demands that are by nature illimitable would have to be reserved for the tertiary sector, and here the question arises as to how these demands could be completely satisfied since they include the desire for leisure.

However many hypotheses one can think of—a stationary population, the saturation point in secondary needs, and so on—the curse of work would still not be abolished. It would still be necessary to divide essential work and to share out equitably incomes which, as regards luxury articles, would still remain unequal.

But to return to earth and to the present day. The satisfaction of primary needs and of an important part of secondary needs has never yet been achieved in any historically known society, though this objective is not beyond the bounds of possibility in the United States, which disposes of a

greater cultivable area per head of population than any other country. Short of inventions which at present would be considered revolutionary or, on the other hand, atomic disasters, technological progress promises to ensure decent conditions of life for all and thereby the possibility of participating in cultural life. The manufacture of synthetic food by chemists and of synthetic raw materials by physicists, the substitution of electronic machines for human labour, are advances which will have to be paid for. Technological gains must be set against the liabilities of industrial society: economic progress so far has created proportionally more clerks than workers, and a society of employees is not necessarily 'reconciled' with itself.

The static society evoked by certain sociologists, such as Jean Fourastié, corresponds more or less to the ultimate end of economic progress such as one can imagine on the basis of present-day experience. It would not modify the essence of the 'economic problem' faced by collectivities: the need to take away from the workers a fraction of the product of their labour for the purpose of investment, the need for a fair distribution of jobs which are not all equally interesting and remunerative, the need to maintain a strict discipline and to ensure the respect of the techno-bureaucratic hierarchy. Pushing Utopia even further, one can conceive that manual labour might cease to be imposed on a minority only, but that everyone should spend part of his day or part of his life in a factory. In this way we transcend the limits of the historical horizon without transcending those of human possibilities. Even on the basis of this extreme hypothesis, certain of the exigencies to which economic life is subject today would be relaxed (in the static society there would no longer be any question of speeding up productivity but merely of maintaining the present level), but none would be completely eliminated.

In contrast to what would happen in a régime of absolute plenty, the 'economic problem' would not be radically resolved. Incomes would be distributed in cash, there would be no freedom for the individual to help himself to his share of the collective output; pay would be related to needs, though production bonuses would remain necessary to a certain extent; no one would be refused a technico-intellectual training, but inequality would continue to exist between individuals according to their abilities and according to the employment they were given in the collectivity.

The static society would not bring about a radical solution to the 'political problem', which boils down to the reconciliation between the equality of men as men and the inequality of their functions in the collectivity. The essential

task, therefore, would not be very different from what it is today: to persuade men to acknowledge the superiority of others without any feeling of constraint and without any surrender of dignity. The attenuation of the rivalry between individuals and groups for the distribution of the national income would help to remove some of the bitterness of the struggle. Here again, experience should advocate caution: the claims of the semi-rich are often the most ardent. People fight for luxuries, for power or for ideas with just as much passion as they fight for money. Interests may be reconciled, but not philosophies.

Supposing the subsistence of each and everyone to be assured, collectivities would no longer appear as spheres of exploitation, continually threatened by their rivals. Inequalities of living standards between nations—the decisive fact of the twentieth century—would have been eliminated. But would the frontier posts have been pulled down? Would the peoples of the world regard one another as brothers? One must adopt a second hypothesis, whereby humanity would no longer be divided into sovereign nations but into groups living peacefully together thanks to the death of States or i^he advent of a universal empire. This hypothesis does not necessarily follow from the first, that of relative or absolute plenty. The quarrels of tribes, of nations or of empires have been linked in a multiplicity of ways with those of classes; they have not been mere manifestations of the class struggle. Race hatreds will survive class distinctions. Collectivities will not cease to clash with one another as soon as they have become indifferent to the taste for booty. The desire for power is no less basic than the desire for wealth.

One can *conceive* the 'radical solution' of the political problem as well as that of the economic problem. One can even establish a political equivalent to the distinction between the 'static society' and 'absolute plenty'. In the political static society, inside each collectivity all would play their part in the body politic, the rulers would rule without resorting to force and the ruled would obey without any feeling of humiliation. Between collectivities, peace would annihilate frontiers and guarantee the rights of individuals. Absolute plenty would be matched by the universality of the State and the homogeneity of the citizens—concepts which are not contradictory but which are well beyond the historical horizon, for they presuppose a fundamental change in the facts of communal life.

Technological progress depends on the development of science, that is to say of reason applied to the study of nature. It could not bring relative plenty

unless one assumed a constant population level, which implies the domination of instinct by reason. It could not guarantee peace between individuals, classes or nations unless one postulated acknowledgment by men everywhere of their common essence and their social diversity, in other words the predominance of reason, in each individual, over the temptation towards revolt and violence. Humanity could never be reconciled with itself on this earth as long as the luxury of the few continued to insult the poverty of the many. Unfortunately, the growth of collective resources and the reduction of inequalities do not change the nature of men and societies: the former remain unstable, the latter hierarchical. Victory over Nature would allow but would not guarantee the rule of reason over the passions.

Thus defined, the concept of the end of history becomes identified not with an abstract ideal (liberty or equality) or with a concrete order. Human customs, in the widest sense of the word, do not represent a problem or comprise a solution. Any régime will always be characterised by historical contingencies. Between the abstraction of isolated, formal values and the characteristics peculiar to each collectivity, the concept of the end of history helps to establish the conditions on which one might succeed in satisfying simultaneously the innumerable demands we impose on society. The end of history is an idea formed by reason; it characterises not the individual man but the struggle of men collectively through the course of time. It is the 'project' of humanity in so far as the latter claims to be rational.

History and Fanaticism

In following the stages of historical interpretation, we have arrived at the concept of the end of history (or of pre-history) of which expressions such as 'the privileged state which gives a meaning to the whole' are the more or less formalised equivalents. The preceding analysis will allow us to go more deeply into the criticism sketched out in the previous chapters concerning the philosophy of the 'Churchmen' and the 'faithful'.

One can *conceive* the radical solution of the problem of communal life, whether or not one regards its realisation as possible. But there is a permanent temptation to substitute for the concept of resolved contradictions either an abstract formula—equality or fraternity—or a reality that is at once exceptional and commonplace.

M. Merleau-Ponty, as we have seen, commits these two errors each in turn. Left to itself, the idea of 'recognition' or 'acknowledgment' is as empty as that

of liberty or fraternity, unless it assumes a social homogeneity among those who recognise or acknowledge one another: in this case, mutual acknowledgment would be impossible between officers and private soldiers, managers and workers, and society as such would be inhuman.

In order to give some substance to the notion of 'recognition', the same author has recourse to criteria some of which— for example public ownership—are too concrete, and others —for example, the spontaneity of the masses, or internationalism—too vague.

In Stalinist philosophy, the 'privileged' or 'final' state does not resolve itself into an ideal, but declines into a commonplace event. In the eyes of the orthodox, as soon as a Communist party has seized power the essential rupture is accomplished and one is on the way to the classless society. In fact, nothing is settled and the same necessities of accumulation, inequalities of pay, incentives and discipline subsist after the revolution. But, in the eyes of the orthodox, all these curses of industrial civilisation have changed their meaning, since the proletariat reigns and socialism is being built up.

Having confused an ideal or an episode with an objective that is at once imminent and sacred, 'Churchmen' and 'faithful' reject, with indifference or contempt, the rules of wisdom that statesmen have elaborated in order to harness for the good of the collectivity the egoism and the passions of individuals. Constitutional government, the balance of power, legal guarantees, the whole edifice of political civilisation slowly built up over the course of the ages and always incomplete, is calmly pushed aside. They accept an absolute State, allegedly in the service of the Revolution; they are not interested in the plurality of parties and the autonomy of working-class organisations. They do not protest against lawyers bullying their clients and accused persons confessing to imaginary crimes. After all, is not revolutionary justice directed towards the 'radical solution of the problem of coexistence', whilst 'liberal justice' applies unjust laws?

Statesmen who do not claim to know history's last word sometimes hesitate before embarking on an enterprise, however attractive, the cost of which would be too high. 'Churchmen' and 'faithful' ignore such scruples. The sublime end excuses the revolting means. Profoundly moralistic in regard to the present, the revolutionary is cynical in action. He protests against police brutality, the inhuman rhythm of industrial production, the severity of bourgeois courts, the execution of prisoners whose guilt has not been proved beyond doubt. Nothing, short of a total 'humanisation', can appease his

hunger for justice. But as soon as he decides to give his allegiance to a party which is as implacably hostile as he is himself to the established disorder, we find him forgiving, in the name of the Revolution, everything he has hitherto relentlessly denounced. The revolutionary myth bridges the gap between moral intransigence and terrorism.

There is nothing more commonplace than this double game of inflexibility and tolerance, of which, in our day, the idolatry of history is the manifestation if not the intellectual origin. On the pretext of discovering the meaning of history, the unavoidable constraints of thought and action are totally disregarded.

The plurality of meanings which we ascribe to an act reveals not our incapacity but the limits of our knowledge and the complexity of reality. Only when we recognise that the world is essentially equivocal have we any chance of reaching the truth. Our understanding is not incomplete because we lack omniscience, but because the plurality of meanings is implicit in the object of our understanding.

The plurality of values on which any judgment of a social order must be based does not call for a definitive choice. Economic or political systems are neither infinitely variable, like human customs, nor incapable of modification, like the principles of an ideal law. They forbid acquiescence in anarchical scepticism, whereby all societies are regarded as equally detestable and in the long run everyone decides as his fancy dictates; they also discourage all claims to the possession of the key to human destiny.

A solution of the 'economic problem' and of the 'political problem' is conceivable because one can succeed in establishing the constant data of both of them. But this constancy does not permit us to imagine that one can ever make a sudden jump from the realm of necessity to that of freedom.

The end of history, according to revealed religion, can result from the conversion of souls or from a decree of the deity. Relative or absolute plenty, peaceful relations between collectivities, the voluntary submission of men to their freely chosen rulers—all these are not beyond the bounds of human possibility. In measuring the distance between what is and what should be, we compare the realities which meet our eyes with these ultimate aims, and by means of this comparison we have a chance of choosing rationally, but only on condition that we never assimilate the object of our historical choice with the idea of a radical solution.

This idea rightly challenges the cynical or naturalistic ideologies which regard man as an animal and teach one to treat him as such. It enables us to condemn institutions which by their very nature deny men's humanity. But it has not the power to determine concretely what the social order should be, or what our obligations should be, at any given moment.

The essential historicity of political choices is founded not on the rejection of the natural law, nor on the opposition of facts and values, nor on the mutual incongruity of the great civilisations, nor on the impossibility of arguing with those who refuse to argue. Even if we assumed that there were principles of law superior to the course of history, even if we eliminated from the discussion the power-hungry fanatic who does not care a fig if he is caught out in a blatant contradiction, even if we ignored the peculiarities of cultures which are incapable of communicating, political choice would still remain inseparable from particular circumstances, sometimes rational but never finally proved and never of the same nature as scientific truths or moral imperatives.

The impossibility of proof is due to the intractable laws of social existence and the plurality of values. Incentives are needed in order to increase productivity; an edifice of authority must be built up in order to persuade quarrelsome and recalcitrant individuals to co-operate; these ineluctable necessities symbolise the gap between the history which we live and the end of history which we conceive. Not that work or obedience as such are contrary to man's predestined lot, but they become so if they are born of constraint. And violence has never ceased to play a part in any known society. In this sense, politics have always been based on the notion of the lesser evil, and they will continue to be so as long as men are what they are.

What passes for optimism is most often the effect of an intellectual error. It is permissible and quite reasonable to prefer planning to the free market, but anyone who expects planning to usher in the reign of plenty misjudges the efficiency of bureaucrats and the extent of available resources. It is not absurd to prefer the authority of a single party to the slow deliberations of the parliamentary system, but anyone who counts on the dictatorship of the proletariat to accomplish freedom misjudges human nature and ignores the inevitable results of the concentration of power in a few hands. It is possible to transform writers into engineers of the soul and to recruit artists into the service of propaganda, but anyone who wonders why philosophers who are prisoners of dialectical materialism or novelists enslaved by socialist realism

are lacking in genius misjudges the very essence of the creative process. The idolators of history cause more and more intellectual and moral havoc, not because they are inspired by good or bad sentiments, but because they have wrong ideas.

Human reality in process of development has a structure; every action has a place in a complex of actions; individuals are bound up with régimes; ideas organise themselves into doctrines. One cannot ascribe to the conduct or the thoughts of others a meaning arbitrarily deduced from one's own interpretation of events. The last word is never said and one must not judge one's adversaries as if one's own cause were identified with the ultimate truth.

A true understanding of the past recalls us to the duty of tolerance; a false philosophy of history breeds only fanaticism.

What, then, in the last analysis, is the significance of the question so often asked: has history a meaning? In one sense, it can be answered immediately. History is as intelligible as the acts and the works of men, as long as one discovers therein a common mode of thinking and reacting.

In another sense, history is also quite obviously meaningful. One understands an event by placing it in a context, and an achievement by establishing either the inspiration of the creator or the significance of the creation for the near or distant spectator. Meanings are as manifold as the orientations of curiosity or the dimensions of reality. The real question turns on the singular. Since every moment of history has several meanings, how can history as a whole have only one?

There is a three-fold plurality to overcome: that of civilisations, that of régimes and that of activities—art, science, religion.

The plurality of civilisations would be mastered if and when it could be said that all men belonged to a single vast society; the plurality of régimes if and when the collective order was organised in accordance with the 'project' of Humanity; and the plurality of activities if and when a universally valid philosophy established the destination of mankind.

Will a universal State consistent with men's perennial demands be finally established? The question turns on events to come and we cannot answer dogmatically yes or no. For *political* development to have a single meaning it

would suffice for humanity to have a single vocation, for societies, instead of being strangers to one another, to appear as successive stages in a quest.

Would this universal State solve the riddle of history? Yes, in the eyes of those who see no other end but the rational exploitation of the planet. No, in the eyes of those who decline to confuse existence in society with the salvation of the soul. Whatever the answer, it will be formulated by philosophy and not by knowledge of the past.

In the last analysis, history has the meaning which our philosophy ascribes to it—an imaginary museum if man is essentially the builder of monuments, the creator of sublime forms and images for their own sake—or Progress if the indefinite exploration of Nature alone raises the human above the level of animality. The meaning given by philosophy to the historic adventure determines the structure of essential development, but it does not determine the future.

The philosopher, not the historian, knows what man seeks. The historian, not the philosopher, tells us what man has found and what, perhaps, he will find tomorrow.

CHAPTER VI

THE ILLUSION OF NECESSITY

"**H**ISTORY has a meaning only if there is a sort of logic of human coexistence which does not strictly preclude any given venture, but which, as though by a process of natural selection, at least eliminates those which diverge from the perennial requirements of mankind."*

We have up to now put aside the question of determinism or prevision, which is confused with that of the ultimate purpose of humanity: supposing one has defined an existence which is consonant with "the perennial requirements of mankind", is one entitled to assert that it will necessarily be realised?

One can admit without absurdity that the future is foreseeable and fixed in advance, and yet contrary to "the perennial requirements of mankind". One can conceive also that we may know what should be the relations between men, without being able to affirm or deny that events will of themselves eliminate "ventures which diverge".

The double meaning of the French word *sens* contributes to the confusion, since one seeks to establish either the *direction* in which societies evolve, or the *privileged state* which might accomplish our ideal. The secularised theologies of history postulate an agreement between this evolution and this ideal, and they owe their success to this postulate, irrational though it is.

Can one establish through observation the equivalent of the Hegelian Ruse of Reason which makes use of human passions to attain its end? Does the determinism of interests or economic forces tend irresistibly towards a rational conclusion?

* M. Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.,* p. 166.

The Determinism of Chance

Let us revert to the examples which we cited in the preceding chapter. Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the Austrian ministers sent an ultimatum to

Belgrade, Hitler gave the order for the launching of Operation 'Barbarossa'. Each of these acts is intelligible when it is related to the 'project' of the actor and to the situation in which he found himself; the historian establishes motives and incentives, the circumstances which suggested or imposed the decision. But there is nothing to prevent us from asking another question. Could not the decisions of Caesar, of the Austrian ministers, of Hitler, have been other than what they were? It is not a question of challenging the principle of determinism. The assertion that the state of the world at moment A did not allow moment B to be other than it was, is irrelevant to the strictly historical problem. Were the decisions of Caesar, of the Austrian ministers, of Hitler, implied by the circumstances? If other men in their place had acted otherwise, does it not follow that the course of events could have been different? Can one prove that the consequences of each of these decisions are limited in time in such a way that, finally, 'it would have come to the same thing in the end'? If the war of 1914 had broken out five or ten years later, would it have ended in the same way? Would the Revolution have triumphed in Russia under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky?

These remarks have been formulated in a negative form: *'one cannot prove that* . . ." The same idea could be formulated in positive terms. An event, in so far as it results from the action of one man, expresses the man at the same time as the historical contingency. The psychology of the actor reflects the training he has received and the influence of his environment, but the decision taken at a given moment was not the *necessary* effect of training or environment. Since his arrival in the position where his behaviour affects the whole of society was also not strictly determined by the situation, an indefinite sequence of events has its origin in the action of an individual.

Political history, the history of wars and States, is neither unintelligible nor accidental. It is no more difficult to understand a battle than to understand military institutions or methods of production. Historians have never attributed the grandeur and the decadence of peoples to chance alone. But military defeats do not always prove the decadence of empires: foreign invasion has destroyed some of the most flourishing civilisations. There is no correlation between the cause and the effect. The events reveal only an aleatory determinism, connected not so much with the imperfection of our knowledge as with the structure of the human world.

Every time one places an act in relation to a situation, one must make allowances for a margin of uncertainty. If one is considering a longish period and a global civilisation, the margin of uncertainty can be identified as the

human capacity to choose, to will and to create. The environment throws out a challenge and societies prove themselves either capable of meeting it or not. The metaphysic of the life-force, in individuals or societies, is simply a question of translating into a concept or an image whatever we experience. The fate of a society is explained by the virtues peculiar to the particular human group. If we seek to establish how this fate was determined, we ask ourselves what likelihood there is that the aptitudes necessary for a successful response to the challenge will manifest themselves another time when the same challenge is repeated. A civilisation born of the clash between an environment and a will is comparable to a lucky draw: rare have been the cases when the environment has given men a chance, or when they were capable of seizing the chance that was offered.

The fortuitousness of historical explanation becomes clearer if one places oneself on a somewhat lower plane. Neither the attitude of Louis XVI to the financial crisis and the States-General, nor the attitude of Hitler in 1940 to the continued resistance of Great Britain and the menacing and enigmatic presence of the USSR behind him, was preordained by the circumstances. Another king might have faced up to the crisis, might have used his troops against the Parisian rioters; another dictator might have maintained a state of non-belligerence with the East while increasing his efforts to force the Westerners to sue for peace. Neither the behaviour of Louis XVI nor that of Hitler is unintelligible. One derives from the way of thinking proper to the descendant of an ancient royal line, the other from that of the parvenu demagogue who has won supreme power. But once it is agreed—and this surely cannot be denied—that a king endowed by the hazards of heredity with a different character would have been capable of acting otherwise, the decisions of Louis XVI in relation to the situation acquire an element of chance. Once it is agreed that the strategy finally decided on by Hitler was the result of calculations which, with another dictator or with the same dictator otherwise informed or influenced, might have been different, the development of the Second World War can then be seen as unique and unpredictable.

The man who finds himself called upon to take a historical decision expresses his society or his age; but the political or military fortune of that man has never been strictly determined by the social structure taken as a whole. The collapse of the French monarchy and the success of the Revolution opened unlimited prospects to a young, gifted, low-born officer. The career of Bonaparte is typical of the time in which he lived. But no-one could have foreseen that the individual who was to be brought to the summit

should have been precisely Napoleon Bonaparte. The fact depended on innumerable causes, positive or permissive, comparable to the innumerable causes which make the roulette ball stop on one number rather than another. The accession of Napoleon to the throne is a lucky draw, among many conceivable others, in the great lottery of revolutions. But the fact that Napoleon, as master of France, conducted a policy which expressed his unique personality and not the tendencies common to crowned adventurers, means that the various circumstances which fed his ambition appear to develop indefinite consequences, at least as long as the institutions of France and Europe continue to bear the imprint of his genius.

Men of action love to invoke their star, as though they felt themselves to be playthings of providence, of a malign genius, or of the anonymous and mysterious force that is known as chance. They feel that rational action is merely a question of calculating the chances.

The war leader, the politician, the speculator, the business man rarely have a knowledge of the contingencies which allows a strict combination of means with a view to an end. They take a chance, and they cannot but take a chance. The reaction of the enemy is never entirely foreseeable at the moment when one draws up a plan of campaign; the factors on which the success of a parliamentary manoeuvre depends are too numerous to be counted; the stock exchange speculator takes no account of government interventions or political events which might alter the atmosphere of the market; the business man who draws up a programme of investments counts on a phase of expansion. The structural characteristics of human action—the clash of wills, the complexity of circumstances, chance phenomena and the various causes of deviation—are no longer disregarded by sociological theorists. How could they be neglected by those who would understand history? When they refer to the moment of choice, in order to establish the possible choices, they re-enact the deliberation of the original actors, they reconstruct the events as they were lived, not as the unfolding of a necessity but as the explosion of the actual.

For all that, probability is not strictly objective: decisions relate to situations from which they become detached, great men 'express' their environment, chains of events are never radically distinct. It is the human mind which fails to decipher the contingencies or to exhaust the possible causes. But retrospective calculations of probability correspond to the prospective calculations of the actors. The historical world itself outlines the distinction between mass data (the size of populations, the means of production, class oppositions) and the actions of individuals, between the

unfolding of a necessity and the nodal events before which destiny pauses, the big dates which mark the beginning or the end of an age, the accidents which alter the destiny of a civilisation. The structure of history is sufficiently problematical to allow us to apply the same mode of thought to it.

These formal considerations are not intended to magnify the role of great men or the responsibility of historical accidents. The dogmatic denial of that role or that responsibility is nevertheless unthinkable. In each case, one must ask oneself to what extent the man chosen by the political lottery has set his seal on the course of his epoch, whether a defeat has confirmed or provoked the decomposition of a State, whether an event has reflected or distorted the relationship of the various forces or the movement of ideas. The answer will never be black or white, necessity or accident: the work of the hero has been prepared by history, even if another would have given it a different character.

Historians are inclined either to minimise or to exaggerate the importance of unforeseeable circumstances or chance occurrences. This tendency cannot be given the status of a philosophy; it reveals a prejudice or a particular orientation of curiosity. A problem which derives from experience and admits of no universally valid solution cannot be settled philosophically. Why should the margin of creation or efficaciousness left to individuals or to accidents be equally wide or equally narrow in every period or in every sector?

Events are none-the-less intelligible for being related to the intentions or the feelings of a small group or even of a single man. Whether one attributes a victory to superior fire-power or to the genius of the commander, the explanation becomes neither more nor less satisfying to the mind. Perhaps, as certain military writers affirm, weapons and organisations are ninety per cent responsible, and the rest, the morale and fighting qualities of the troops and the talents of the strategist, ten per cent. That is a question of fact, not of doctrine.

The fear that the intervention of fragmentary facts—individual decisions or accidental encounters—will destroy the intelligibility of the whole is quite ill-founded. That the facts, in detail, might have been other than they were does not prevent us from understanding the whole. One would have understood Napoleon's victory "if it had been Grouchy"; one would have understood the industrialisation of Russia with the help of foreign capital under a progressively liberal Czarist régime basing itself on a class of peasant proprietors, if the war of 1914 had not broken out and if the Bolshevik Party

had been eliminated. Whatever the probability one ascribes retrospectively to these hypotheses—in the strictest terms, however many data one must modify in one's mind in order to make possible what did not occur—the actual course of events remains intelligible. Lenin's victory was perhaps the inevitable outcome of the Civil War after the collapse of the Czarist régime and the continuation of the war by the provisional government. Inevitable as it was in the particular set of circumstances, the victory of the Bolsheviks perhaps did not bring the blessings which the Russian people expected or which the building up of a modern economy would have produced at lesser cost.

The historian who retraces an episode or adventure— Napoleon's career between 1798 and 1815, or Hitler's between 1933 and 1945—must make the whole intelligible. He does not suggest that at every moment a global determinism reigned. He is tempted to seek the deep, original causes of what finally happened. Napoleon's imperialist undertaking failed because its French basis was too narrow, because the means of communication and administration were unequal to such an enterprise, because the French armies aroused the patriotism of the peoples whose countries they occupied by the contrast between the ideas they propagated and the repressive order they imposed. Hitler's undertaking was doomed because it provoked a coalition between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Saxon States. Such explanations are valid enough as far as they go: they indicate the causes which rendered *probable* the final failure. But these causes did not determine in advance either the detail or the duration of the adventure and did not exclude accidents. A breakdown of the Anglo-Austrian-Russian alliance would have saved Napoleon in 1813, a rupture between the Soviet Union and the Western powers would have saved Hitler's Germany, just as Frederick the Second was saved by the breakdown of the Austro-Russian alliance of his day. (For a multitude of reasons, these eventualities were improbable in 1813 and 1944.) Destiny might have been reversed by secret weapons, by the perfecting of the atom bomb (though there again, for other reasons, such an eventuality was improbable).

The concatenation of global facts, which one disentangles at a certain level above the chaos of events and individuals, does not exclude the role of individuals or chance encounters. The intelligible reconstruction of the past has to do with reality; on principle it ignores 'might-have-beens' and is not concerned with necessity. If one poses the question of causality, the answer is always the same: given certain circumstances, what did happen was more

likely to happen than not. (If, in a game of *boule,* one of the numbers is considerably bigger than the others, it will come up more often.)

The determinist interpretation and the contingent vision of the course of history are complementary rather than contradictory. One cannot show the partial truth of the one without taking the other into consideration. Why should the historian deny retrospectively the authenticity of the dramatic events we live through? Man, in history, does not ask himself whether he is the slave of his heredity or of his education, but whether he is capable of leaving traces of his sojourn on this earth. Why should he think up after the event a predestination which the living know nothing of?

Theoretical Predictions

Historical events are foreseeable precisely to the extent to which they are causally explicable. Past and future are homogeneous: scientific propositions do not change their character according to whichever of the two they are being applied. Why do so many historians tend to regard the past as preordained and the future as indeterminate?

In most cases, one cannot foresee the decision an individual will take among several possible decisions, but one makes intelligible the one which has in fact been taken by relating it to the circumstances, to the aims of the actor, to the exigencies of politics or strategy. Retrospective interpretation is always formulated either in terms of factual statement: 'things happen thus . . .' or hypotheses: 'such a motive was at the origin of such a course of action'. It does not allow us to know what will happen tomorrow, unless it is sufficiently abstract to be applicable to other contingencies: if the act resulted from a durable disposition of the individual or the group, if it was imposed by circumstances, prediction immediately becomes possible because the interpretation implicitly contained a causal relationship.

When this relationship appears, the homogeneity of past and future reinstates itself, although it is often concealed by the language used. Since one knows the outcome, one does not hesitate to represent an event as the effect of a single cause, forgetting that effect and cause result from a selection and an arbitrary division. One ignores the variable factors which might have intervened, and one represents as a necessary sequence of events what was valid only 'all things being equal'. After 1942 or 1943, one foresaw Hitler's defeat, just as, looking back, one can perceive how it was determined: the fundamental data of the situation made the outcome of the conflict

foreseeable, because, in all probability, inevitable. For the war to have taken another course, an accident of some sort—secret weapons or a breakdown of the anti-German alliance—would have been necessary. Looking to the future, one does not dare to exclude such reversals.

One will never succeed in predicting the exact date and the exact circumstances of a particular war. Perhaps, in 1905 or in 1910, a few perspicacious individuals may have perceived that a crisis was brewing which would lead to a European war. They would not have been able to say at what date it would break out or what circumstances would precipitate it. The fundamental data of the situation in 1914 did not imply the explosion and it is therefore not without interest to study the men who, in August, 1914, brought about an event which, at that particular moment, was no more determined by the European situation than it had been during the course of the preceding years or than it would have been in the following years if the outbreak of war had been avoided then.

Beyond this predictability in vague terms or this unpredictability in precise terms, can one establish the causes which make armed conflicts between sovereign States with variable frequency inevitable? One cannot, for the moment, dogmatically affirm or deny the possibility of a theory. War seems to be tied up with too many different social phenomena for one to be able to enumerate all of them. Being a global fact, it reflects the nature of international relations. It would probably be necessary to alter the essence of the latter in order to eliminate the risk of war.

Facts relating to population—birth rate, death rate, age distribution—are the most susceptible to prediction: the determining variables are few in number, are not subject to rapid changes of value arid are little affected by external influences. To calculate, on the basis of those already born, the classes which will be available for military service ten or twenty years hence would involve comparatively few risks: the formula 'all things being equal' would in this case amount to disregarding the eventuality of military disasters, epidemics or famines, in other words a sudden modification of the 'expectation of life'. Demographic predictions twenty or fifty years ahead are more chancy, because an evolution does not always continue in the same direction. A fall in the birth rate—as one has seen in the case of France—is liable to be followed by a sudden rise.

It is in the economic sector that attempts at prediction are most often made, although it cannot be said that any method is fully satisfactory or

capable of achieving incontrovertible results. Short-term prediction, in a national framework, presupposes a knowledge of the principal variables within the system. It rarely involves serious errors, because, short of exceptional circumstances, tendencies do not change abruptly. Prediction could never achieve strict accuracy unless the innumerable circuits through which products pass were known in detail and the variables liable to affect the global movement were determined. In any case it would remain uncertain: human behaviour, in particular the behaviour of business men, obeys collective and unpredictable movements of confidence or mistrust.

In logical terms, predictions relating to the trade cycle fall into the same category. In 1953, the experts did not agree on the consequences of the American recession, or even on the circumstances which provoked it. The nature and the significance of an over-all theory in this field are often debated: granted the vulnerability to crisis of a full employment economy, it has nevertheless not been proved that the variable which brings about the reversal of the tendency is always the same, or that a mathematical model can be used. The idea of the snowball of economic expansion or recession is well known, and it may be that the psychology of consumers, business men or ministers may influence the development of a recession which is at first limited. Every crisis has its history. The interdependence of all the variables of an economic system may enable us to elaborate a theory, but the theory does not reveal regularities so much as possible chains of circumstance between which, in each case, events determine the one which actually happens.

Whether confirmed or belied, these short or medium term predictions do not raise any question of principle. The scepticism of politicians is just as deplorable as the overconfidence of experts. Through experience, one gets to know just how precise and accurate any forecast can be, and the limits will vary according to the system.

These elementary remarks bring us to the real problem which concerns us here: whether the evolution of economic systems, or the transition from one system to another, is predictable. Can one prove that capitalism destroys itself, that socialism must necessarily follow it even though one does not know when and how?

The unpredictability of the recent American recession does not imply the unpredictability of long-term historical development. According to the level

they take place on, events appear to be determined by calculable causes or subject to innumerable influences. An estimate of the American national income twenty years hence may well be less chancy than an estimate of the production index twenty months hence (although the twenty-year prediction presupposes that no unexpected disturbance supervenes—which, in a period of war or revolution, is a very serious reservation). It remains for us to decide whether internal transformations or the collapse of an economic system belong to the category of predictable facts, in other words determined by a few causes with discernible effects.

Granted that a system based on the profit motive and the demands of millions of consumers is unstable; it nevertheless exists and survives. In order to prove its inevitable self-destruction, one must first specify the circumstances in which it will be disabled, and then show that these circumstances flow irresistibly from the functioning of the régime. The law known as the law of the falling rate of profit represents an attempt of this kind, but it is now no more than a curiosity. It presupposes, in effect, that the profit is taken off the surplus value alone—in other words, that portion of the value which corresponds to the cost of labour. One must accept the law of labour value, the Marxist conception of wages and surplus value, and subscribe to the thesis according to which the profit rate decreases in exact ratio to the decrease in the variable portion of the capital. And the establishment of an average profit rate would prevent one from recognising that the replacement of the worker by the machine reduces the possibilities of profit. The fact that so many hypotheses are necessary to reconcile a theory with the facts should persuade one to abandon the theory itself.

The law of the falling rate of profit would not justify the belief that capitalism must inevitably destroy itself. There are, indeed, influences which tend to slow down the decline in the profit rate. (For example, the reduction of the value of the commodities needed for the maintenance of the worker and his family.) In the framework outlined in *Das Kapital,* the mass of the surplus value increases with the number of workers. We are left in the dark about the speed at which the profit rate decreases, and about the minimum rate necessary for the survival of the system.

The fact that there is no genuine theory proving the inevitable downfall of capitalism does not, it is true, tell us anything about its future chances of survival. A theory can usually be reduced to a simplified pattern. Patterns of perpetual harmony are easy to invent (liberals never stop inventing them). On

the other hand, the pessimists find it difficult to invent patterns which confirm their sombre views: if capitalism were essentially based on a contradictory pattern, it would never have existed. The pessimists are not theorists but historians; they see before their eyes an inevitable decline.

Thus the economists who talk of capitalist maturity deem that the development of the American economy has created a situation in which full employment has become, if not impossible, at least difficult. Marx had imagined that the profit motive, the core and the basic principle of the system, tended to dry up the source of profit. There were some economists who, observing the disappearance of frontiers, the slowing down of the birth rate, the decrease in the number of profitable investments as machinery developed, were inclined to fear that the relationship between the marginal utility of capital and the rate of interest might be such that a margin of unemployment would be permanently created.

Twenty years ago, the doctrine of 'maturity'—the modern version of the self-destruction of capitalism—was very fashionable. Today it is no longer so: the expansion of the American economy has encouraged a more optimistic view. It is not inconceivable that at a certain moment an economy based on the free market might be hamstrung by a reduction in the number of profitable investments. The opportunities for investment created by technological progress might be less frequent and more difficult to exploit than the opportunities typically presented in the initial phases of industrialisation—the construction of roads, railways and motor-car factories. Even on this assumption, economists who do not claim to be prophets do not foresee either the apocalyptic collapse of capitalism or the inevitability of total planning, but simply the necessity of government intervention in the shape of the lowering of the rate of interest or State investments.*

Does experience suggest that the mechanism of the market is eliminated by planning in proportion as capitalist systems grow older? The Russian economy which, in terms of income per head of population or of capital per worker or of the distribution of labour between the three sectors, is about half a century younger than the American economy, is subject to central planning whereas the latter is not. The distribution of economic systems throughout the world, in the mid-twentieth century, is a historical fact, and has nothing to do with economic maturity.*

* Personally, I regard the opposite hypothesis as more probable. Given the absence of progress in the tertiary sector, the difficulty, more or less grave according to the different phases, appears to me to be that of the transfer of the means of production, labour in particular. One can see no decisive reason why the functioning of the system should, at a certain moment, become impossible or essentially different. Opportunities for investment in the secondary sector do not disappear after a certain stage of development is reached.

Does socialisation gain ground within economies which remain essentially capitalistic, as those economies reach maturity? There is no lack of arguments in favour of this thesis: the State assumes responsibility for prosperity and full employment; forced saving (budget surplus and self financing) replaces individual and voluntary saving, price controls or government subsidies become more and more numerous, and so on. It is an incontrovertible fact that State intervention has increased in the twentieth century in all capitalist countries, but the role of the State is not proportionate to the economic age of the countries concerned. Nationalisations are not the effect of economico-technical development; they are tied up with politics and democratic institutions. The socialisation of the economy has been a story, different in each country, determined by a few general facts, among which universal suffrage is as important as the increase of productivity and the accumulation of fixed capital in the big industries.

Nor can one observe any connection between economico-technical development and the system of ownership. There is no logical reason why the giant enterprises imposed by the technological optimum should be publicly owned—unless one agrees to regard the status of General Motors as tantamount to nationalisation. (Perhaps, indeed, this would be the interpretation most consistent with the underlying thought of Marx the sociologist, not Marx the prophet—the appearance of the first joint stock companies led the author of *Das Kapital* to some significant remarks about a new form of capitalism.) The capitalism of the industrial barons, symbolised by the textile factory during the first half of the nineteenth century, and by the metallurgical industry during the second half, has not been eliminated, but merely driven back by other forms all of which appear socially collective. It was politics, not technology, which ordained the socialisation of the French electricity and gas industries.

* Even the statement which is the opposite of that of Marx—that centralised planning is a necessity in primary industrialisation—would be true only in a general sense.

In other words, either one interprets the predictions as to the self-destruction of capitalism in a strict sense, in which case they have not been confirmed by events. Or one interprets them in a wide sense and they merely imply a progressive 'socialisation' (the growing intervention of the State, the 'deprivatisation' of enterprises without complete nationalisation), in which case the predictions are true but cut right across, the present conflicts.

It would be wrong to accept unreservedly this latter interpretation, to admit an indefinite evolution in one and the same direction. Concentration is not a simple phenomenon which technical requirements or the modalities of competition must ruthlessly accentuate. The enlargement of production units in certain sectors results from considerations of productivity; in other sectors, the movement would appear to be rather in the opposite direction. It is already a commonplace proposition that electrical energy brings possibilities of dispersion. As for the financial concentrations in the big corporations, these, it would seem, derive more from the will to power than the desire for bigger returns. They are born sometimes from free competition, sometimes from the decisions of planners. They do not condemn one system to extinction any more than the other.

It will be said that we have ignored the central argument in the thesis, the 'contradictions of capitalism'. The contradiction most frequently quoted is the one between the forces and the relations of production. What exactly is meant by 'the forces of production'? The sum total of the resources at the disposal of a collectivity, scientific knowledge, industrial apparatus, organising capacity and manpower? In this case, the development of productive forces can be used to designate several phenomena: the augmentation of the quantity of raw materials and of the number of workers, the raising of productivity thanks to the progress of knowledge or the application of science to industry, the increase of income per head of population thanks to the discovery of mineral deposits or to higher output per worker. The relations of production seem to include at once the legal status of ownership, the relations between the agents of production, the distribution of incomes and the class oppositions resulting therefrom. What is meant by the 'contradiction' between these two equivocal terms?

According to one interpretation, it is suggested that property legislation, after a certain stage of technological development is reached, puts a stop to economic progress. This is refuted by the facts: capitalist legislation is sufficiently flexible to allow enormous industrial or financial concentrations. Legislation may sometimes have favoured traditional enterprises to the exclusion of new and more effective methods. But this legislation is not rigid: nowhere does it doom capitalism to extinction.

Perhaps one should interpret the relations of productions as not so much a juridical technique as the distribution of incomes resulting from the separation of the working classes from the instruments of their labour? To quote a catchphrase: the organisation of production is collective, the distribution of incomes individual. But there again, the contradiction exists only in the words.

Translated into ordinary language, it amounts to a variation on the theory, not unknown to bourgeois economists, of under-consumption: in search of profits capitalists would reduce the workers' wages, and, for lack of outlets, would accumulate means of production at the expense of consumer goods and the standard of living of the masses.* Historically, the unequal distribution of incomes in certain countries may have encouraged the excessive accumulation of wealth and the flight of capital, and indirectly put a brake on the expansion of productive forces. At the present day, the so-called capitalist régimes know how to modify, by taxation, the spontaneous distribution of incomes. Real wages, in the long run, do not evolve independently of the productivity of labour. There is no apparent reason why the tension between the industrial system and the distribution of incomes should become aggravated.

* This description is more applicable to Soviet socialism than to Western capitalism.

Not that one would wish to conjure up an optimistic vision of a capitalism evolving peacefully towards the highest level of prosperity for all. A system based on private ownership and the market is by its very nature unstable; it involves the risk of slumps and the reactions to crises bring structural changes which are often irreversible. Technological progress inexorably modifies the dimensions and the organisation of industrial enterprises and in consequence certain aspects of the economic system as a whole. A mature capitalism produces not hordes of miserable wretches who have nothing to lose but their chains, but masses of petty bourgeois workers or employees who often revolt

against the cost of competition. One cannot deny that things are developing towards a less capitalist economy, but it must be firmly established that this development is not subject to an inflexible determinism, itself ordained by the contradiction between certain elementary variables. Even in its broad lines, this development is a complex story, not a simple necessity. Far from invoking the contradictions of capitalism in order to herald the inevitable victory of a single party based on socialism, one cannot even predict the advent of socialism in the vaguest sense of the word.

The characteristics of the future economic system which lend themselves to prediction are no more incompatible with the systems we call capitalist than with those which we call socialist.

Historical Predictions

The 'contradictions' between capitalist States, or those between capitalist States and colonial countries, are indisputable, if one substitutes for the spuriously exact term 'contradiction' the more neutral term 'conflict'. Can one infer from this that wars between capitalist States are inevitable?

In a sense, the formula is almost obvious: no century has yet avoided the scourge of war. If one drops the adjective capitalist and restricts oneself to the assertion that 'wars between States are inevitable', one runs little risk of error. The near future does not promise to be more peaceful than the past. The mistake begins when the accent is put on the capitalist nature of States, as if this alone made bloody clashes inevitable.

Not that the struggle for markets and investments cannot bring big companies or nations into conflict with one another. Freedom of trade implies competition, and this is a kind of conflict, though one which normally settles itself by compromise rather than by force of arms. These conflicts become dangerous for peace as soon as States take over the interests of private companies or reserve for themselves a monopoly in colonies or spheres of influence. Anyone who uses force to exclude other countries from legitimate competition is in effect guilty of aggression. There is a tendency for the more extreme manifestations of this form of aggression "to disappear —although in Africa colonial governments still manage to secure illegitimate advantages by various administrative strategems. The life and death of capitalist economies has never depended on these marginal frictions; since they are always one another's best customers, their interdependence ought, according to the rules of wise self-interest, to mitigate their rivalries.

Moreover, any régime, including a régime based on collective ownership and planning, is likely to provoke occasions for conflict between sovereign political units: the manipulation by the Soviet Union of currency exchange rates appeared to the Yugoslavs to be a form of 'socialist exploitation'. Whether the world is capitalist or socialist, the strongest will always retain a variety of means of influencing prices for their own profit, will always monopolise their special spheres of influence. No economic system can guarantee peace, but none, in itself, makes wars inevitable.

The 'contradiction' between the capitalist countries and those of Asia and Africa belongs to the realm of history, not economics. The European empires in Asia have collapsed, those in Africa have been severely shaken, and the age of European domination is vanishing. Does the death of capitalism necessarily follow from this?

In the interpretation of history to which our latter-day Marxists are inclined to subscribe, capitalism is no longer defined as a system based on private ownership of the instruments of production or the processes of the market, but as a concrete agglomeration of countries whose economies present certain characteristics of this system, a conglomeration which comprises Western Europe, the United States and Canada, and the other white British Dominions. South America and the countries recently promoted to independence in Asia are, according to this view, either subject to a hang-over from feudalism, or victims of imperialism (even if they are formally sovereign), or else already capitalist. After the First World War, Russia moved into the socialist camp; after the second, Eastern Europe and China joined her. This camp now comprises eight hundred million people. In Asia, in the Middle East, the revolt against imperialism is gradually gaining ground, and the local bourgeoisies participate in this revolt. Deprived of the profits of colonial exploitation, capitalism is doomed to a slow death if coexistence lasts long enough, and to a violent death if a third world war breaks out.

On the broad outlines of the present situation, there is no serious dispute between the Stalinists and their adversaries, but they do not use the same vocabulary and they do not see the future from the same angle.

If one refuses to be ensnared by words, one will begin by distinguishing between the decline of a historical entity whose relative or absolute strength is diminishing, and the decline of an economic system more or less imperfectly achieved within this entity. The standard of living of the working class has never been as high as it is now in 'decadent' Great Britain. In spite

of two world wars, Western Europe has grown nearer than it has ever been to the realisation of its economic objectives.*

To infer a crisis of capitalism from the end of European colonial domination is to confuse capitalism with imperialism, to affirm that the system based on private ownership and the processes of the market *cannot* function if it has no territories to exploit. There is no proof whatsoever that bourgeois Europe, in losing its colonies, lost its means of subsistence. Indonesia was responsible for an exceptionally high proportion of the Dutch national income (more than fifteen per cent); Indonesia is independent and Holland is still prosperous. The British working class has a higher standard of living than before the war, in spite of the fact that Britain's Indian Empire no longer exists.

* It might be objected that European capitalism has been profoundly transformed, and this is indisputable. Rut this ability to transform itself is a symptom of its vitality.

This is not an attempt to dismiss highly controversial questions in a few slick sentences. The exploitation of Asia in the last century certainly helped the industrialisation of Europe (only the extent of this aid is disputable). The functioning of an international system based on private trade involves growing difficulties in proportion as the area from which a world-wide economy is excluded grows larger. The renewal of East-West exchanges would not eliminate the effects of the cleavage: the more a country depended on outlets situated on the other side of the Iron Curtain, the more it would be vulnerable to political decisions taken in Moscow or in other 'popular democratic' capitals. In order to be able to herald with certainty either the destruction of capitalist societies or their conversion to socialism, one would have to prove that the present situation offers only two alternatives: the victory of the socialist camp or the conversion of the capitalists to socialism.

A shortage of food or raw materials would be fatal to capitalist societies. Perhaps Europe, during this century or the next, will have to pay more for raw materials bought from former colonies which have won their independence (although the deterioration in exchange rates is due only to a very small extent to the liberation of Asia and Africa). Neither Europe nor, *a fortiori,* the United States is on the point of collapse because raw materials are refused them by Communist governments. In the event of Communism expanding further, or the zone of world economy contracting even more, or the threat of another world war increasing, it is conceivable that the Western

governments might be compelled to reduce the freedom of private enterprise, especially as regards international economic relations. But even this development is not inevitable: in 1954, temporarily perhaps, the tendency inside Western countries, as regards trade relations, was towards a relaxation of State control.

In the eyes of the Communists, the historical entity which they christen capitalist is characterised by the private ownership of the means of production and by the mechanism of the market. For the Westerners themselves, the most important characteristics of their civilisation are the plurality of parties, representative institutions, and the free play of ideas, rather than a method of ownership with multifarious variations or an economic technique which is sometimes useful and sometimes dangerous. The fact that circumstances may necessitate further restrictions on private enterprise or increased State economic control will be regarded as a betrayal only by those economists for whom the model of perfect competition is the supreme value of the West or who discern the shadow of the Gestapo behind all fiscal and physical controls.

Historical circumstances have put the societies we know as capitalist in peril: one has only to glance at the map to realise the truth of this. The Russian armies are at Weimar; China is associated in the great crusade of the 'proletariat'; further Communist progress in Asia is highly probable. The revolt against the West, against the richer nations and the tyrants of yesterday, looks towards Communism, not so much through sympathy with a régime which is after all little known as through a fortuitous community of interest. No one can say when and where the diffusion of a belief served by fanatics and supported by immense armies will come to a halt.

Formulated thus, the forecast acquires a certain verisimilitude but not a scientific validity. It is a judgment comparable with the one made fifteen years ago on the respective chances of the Third Reich and its adversaries, though even more fallible. The rivalry between the two blocs is liable to continue for years, for decades, without a third world war, in the conventional meaning of the term, breaking out. We cannot say that total war between the two camps is any more inevitable than total war between capitalist States. This may be because of the limitations of our knowledge, but it is implicit in the structure of historical reality.

What would be the logical significance of the assertion that the third world war will break out during the course of the next ten or twenty years? That

certain global facts—the opposing interests of the Soviet Union and the United States, the characteristics of the respective ruling classes, the rivalry of the two economic systems, and so on—are bound to provoke war, whoever may be in power and whatever unforeseeable incidents or accidental circumstances, good or bad, may supervene. There is nothing to prove that this is the correct interpretation of present probabilities. Maybe the chances are more or less equally balanced.

If one assumes the inevitability of a third world war or the prolongation of the cold war, it is equally difficult to forecast which side will win. If it is puerile to infer from the superior strength of American industry the *necessity* of a Western victory, it is no less puerile to deduce from the more rapid expansion of the Soviet economy the *necessity* of a Communist victory. Either the conflict for the domination of the planet will be settled by force, and so many unforeseeable circumstances (which side will take the initiative? which side will have the best guided missiles or the best aircraft?) will intervene that no one but a crystal-gazer could possibly claim to be able to decipher the riddle of the future. Or the conflict will be settled only gradually, perhaps never decisively, a new equilibrium emerging little by little through the marginal wars and the transformations on both sides, and in this case also the outcome eludes us. Each side knows its own weaknesses better than those of the other. One of the weaknesses of the West is to give some credit to the idea of the inevitable advent of socialism and thus to allow the enemy the conviction that he is somehow in collusion with destiny.

Historical destiny, so far as the past is concerned, is simply the unalterable crystallisation of our actions; in the future it is always undecided. Not that our freedom is absolute: it is limited by human passions, by the heritage of the past, and by collective servitudes. But this does not compel us to submit in advance to a detestable system. There is no such thing as a global determinism. The transcendence of the future, for man in Time, is an incentive to will his own destiny and a guarantee that, whatever happens, hope will not perish.

On the Dialectic

The term dialectic is ambiguous, charged with mysterious overtones. Applied to historical development as a whole, it is susceptible of two interpretations—either a continuous interlacing of causes and effects ending

up with a different system from the one that existed before, or a succession of totalities, each in itself significant, the transition from one to another being consistent with an intelligible necessity.

The first alternative can be clarified by reference to Marxist themes, whereby the development of productive forces is accompanied by a concentration of economic power and involves the expansion and the increased pauperisation of a proletariat which will eventually organise itself into a party irresistibly dedicated to Revolution. According to this view, the movement of history results from the interaction of causes whose mutual relationship is such that there is an inevitable advance from a system of private ownership to a socialist system.

A causal dialectic presents no problem that we have not examined in the preceding pages. It is not inconceivable that an economy based on private ownership and the processes of the market may tend to produce results which render it unworkable. But in fact none of the current versions of this theory will stand up to close examination. Capitalism modifies itself as it develops; it does not destroy itself. Political democracy and ideology rather than technology or industry gradually restrict the role of competition and enlarge that of State control. There is nothing to prove either that the evolution of capitalism will continue indefinitely in the same direction, or that one party or one country must be the sole beneficiary of this historical tendency.

On the other hand, the second interpretation of the dialectic poses quite different problems, which can be summed up in a single question: what is the nature of the link between two moments in history? Are two periods, two ways of life, two civilisations connected with one another by a significant relationship or, at most, by the ambiguous relationships of an accidental determinism? One is tempted to reply that this question belongs not so much to the realm of philosophy or criticism as to that of actual experience. We cannot determine in advance the nature of historical continuity: we must simply observe the past and the question will answer itself. In fact, empirical research presupposes a theory—that the nature of continuity results from the intrinsic characteristics of the real.

Every human act is a choice between several alternatives— a response solicited, but not chained to a contingency: the succession of acts is intelligible without being predetermined. If, therefore, one applies oneself to reconstructing an event as such, history is essentially a sort of graduated diversity. It is not, as such, either progress or decline or an indefinite

repetition of the same pattern. At least, experience alone is capable of showing to what extent or in which sectors events organise themselves either in a progression or in cycles.

On this plane, predictions of the same tentative nature as historical explanations are possible and legitimate. If one has observed the decay of a régime and analysed its causes, and if one finds signs of the same disease in a régime of the same species, one is justified in hazarding a guess that a similar process may develop towards a similar end—though one will be unable to say when. Or again, one may theoretically extend partial sequences whose causes one thinks will continue to operate. These predictions, whether they refer to a progression or a cycle, are subject to a coefficient of uncertainty. A tendency can be reversed: the movement towards further State economic planning which we have observed in the twentieth century may not be continued in the twenty-first. The advance of productivity may be brought to a halt by a military catastrophe or the unlimited expansion of the bureaucracy. British democracy, for example, shows so many original and varied characteristics that its decay could not possibly be determined in advance.

The succession of *works,* unlike the succession of *acts,* has a meaning which can be established by theory: the relationship between different works depends, in effect, on the imminent end of the activity of which they are the expression.

The conquests of science organise themselves into a present whole in which previous conquests find their place in a modified and more specific form. Scientific truth, in the degree to which it can be accurately determined, is present today as on the day when it was first conceived. By what term tan one properly designate this history of science *qua* science? Accumulation, progress, elaboration? In any case, the answer depends on the specific meaning of the scientific entity, not on the circumstances in which it developed.

Only the exploration of the past will allow us to determine how mathematical or physical science in fact developed, at what date and by whom a theory was first formulated, a demonstration completed, a law mathematically expressed. The history of science as a succession of acts enjoys no privileges as compared with the history of other acts. But the relationship between the truths discovered yesterday and the present system derives from philosophical analysis and not from historical research.

The relating of men to institutions, of ideas to economic structures, can contribute to the mutual elucidation of minds and actions crystallised into social matter. As far as science is concerned, the direction of research, the philosophical interpretation of results, and errors also, are made intelligible by influences or environment. But this kind of explanation can never exhaust the meaning of the work *qua* work. Circumstances explain that one has sought or that one has not found the correct solution: they do not determine the discovery of the truth in the same way as superior armament determines the victory of an army. They are not bound up with this discovery as the military situation in 1941 was bound up with Hitler's decision to launch 'operation Barbarossa'. The correct solution of a problem or the formulation of a law is neither the effect of a cause nor the reaction to a contingency; it derives from a capacity for judgment, present in the historian as in the historical person, which events encourage or impede, direct or distort, but do not control.*

In each specific sphere, the distinction between acts and works takes on another significance. In art, the equivalent of *truth* is *quality.* One realises the uniqueness of an art by the environment which produced it, but one cannot explain a masterpiece as such. The actuality of the latter can be compared to that of the real. The latter has a meaning for all time because, in a certain sense, it has a unique and definitive meaning, while the masterpiece has a meaning for all time because it has an inexhaustible meaning, because it reveals to each generation another aspect of humanity.

* Judgment also intervenes in the actions of the politician or the strategist. But these are experienced as a choice between alternatives. The scientist, on the other hand, aspires to bring to light an intelligible necessity which is not the arbitrary creation of his own mind, or even of the human mind as a whole.

Masterpieces do not submit themselves to classification in the same way as scientific propositions, and perhaps each of them, in its most authentic meaning, is the expression of an individual artist, an individual school or an individual society. But in spite of their singularity, works of art are none-the-less connected with one another: one architect finds the given solution to problems faced by all architects. The form, the proportions and the composition of the Parthenon present constant lessons, even if every generation interprets the spiritual message in a different way. The identity of aim and of means creates between the periods of painting or architecture a deep-seated kinship, which confirms not only the unity of the specific

universe but the unique meaning of each creation and the ambiguous connection between the different creations.

In their specific meaning, works of art or philosophy or science appear to the specialised historian as the expression of a community whose law is dialogue rather than imitation or struggle. An innovator in these fields continues the work of those who preceded him, even when he professes to oppose them. The community of scientists, artists or philosophers is never detached from the society whose aspirations and conflicts, whose ideal or real being, it reflects. Nor is it identifiable with this society, even when the thinkers or creators believe themselves to be exclusively in its service. Not that the religious or political convictions of the artist do not often inspire creative effort: but this, when it achieves real quality, is inscribed in the specific universe in which even those who are quite unaware of its significance play their part. To belong to the community of artists, the sculptors of the mediaeval cathedrals had no need of think up the concept of art.

Thus the history of works, whether of science or art, is fundamentally different from the history of events, in that the meaning of the history itself results from the characteristics of the specific universe.

The relationship between two stages in the history of science can be grasped either on the plane of events, in that a discovery may appear accidental or necessitated, attributable to a solitary genius or led up to by a collective effort; or on the plane of significant content, in that the discovery retrospectively assumes an appearance of rationality. One cannot prove that Newton must inevitably have formulated or invented the law of gravity at the time and in the form in which he did so. After the event, the historian tends to trace a rational development from known facts to the law which controls them.

The development of science is not subject to the laws of probabilistic determinism; it is intelligible in itself, without being inferred from a general statement or integrated into a significant whole. The succession of artistic styles or philosophical schools lends itself to an understanding which does not achieve the compulsion of a mathematical demonstration but transcends the accidental character of the decision. Can the predicting of the future involve the rationality of intelligible worlds? And if so, what intelligible worlds?

Neither the development of science nor the development of art is foreseeable. Even if one assumed global history to be comparable to the

history of one specific world, there would be no guarantee that prognostications were authentic. But there is more to it than that. We have seen, in the preceding chapter, the ambiguities of the historical totality. Reference to a single factor would presuppose a unilateral determination which is not conceivable. The existential totality is approximate and arbitrary. The only legitimate interpretation of the totality, which neglects neither the fortuitous nature of determinism nor the plurality of meanings, is that which applies itself to a single problem which is held to constitute the human destiny. If this problem comprises solutions each of which is the necessary condition of the next, if, that is to say, one locates at the end of the development a *radical* solution, history will discover its totality in succession: the privileged state will provide the meaning of the whole.

Such, in effect, is the governing idea of the Hegelian system. The parallelism admitted between the dialectic, of categories and the dialectic of societies imposes on the succession of régimes a necessity analagous to that linking one category to another. The history of philosophy, as such, is a philosophy of history; the ideas concerning the world and themselves which men have invented represent the stages in the development of mind. At the end of it all, the mind will have become aware of Nature and of itself.

Philosophies of history differ according to the specific universe which they take as their model. In so far as they are comparable to works of art, the various civilisations are all unique and self-contained with no other means of communication but an endless dialogue. In so far as they are comparable to the stages in the development of science, they form an inexorable chain of logic. According to the dialectic, they are comparable to the succession of philosophies.

In fact, as we have seen, one can determine the 'final' state at the very most only formally, and even then one has to assume some rational vocation for humanity. This final state does not reveal to us, retrospectively, a pre-necessitated order in the development of society. The approximate order which one can unravel from the accumulation of documents and facts can be effectively explained by an accidental determinism, unpredictable encounters between situations and persons, the natural environment, the specific gravity of collectivities, and the initiative of the few.

To reduce the long apprenticeship of humanity to the striving towards a state of relative material prosperity is sadly to impoverish it. For centuries, the means of production have changed little: must one set at nothing the rise

and fall of nations and empires, the palaces and towers, the monuments and tombs of all the civilisations which bear witness to man's restless spirit? If we turn our backs on the monotonous alternations of war and peace, of rival States and triumphant empires, must we also resign ourselves to forgetting what we may never have a chance to see twice: the Lawgiver, the creator of petrified dreams? Reduced to the antecedents of socialism, the sacred history would retain almost nothing of the works and adventures which, for so many millions of men, were the justification of their sojourn on this earth.

If one concentrates one's attention on the succession of social régimes, one may understand but one will not see its necessity. From one civilisation to the next, analogies, passably crude, will be found. The duration of different phases, allegedly uniform, varies from one to the other. Empires rise up either a few centuries sooner or a few centuries later (if we call empires all political unities imposed on various peoples over vast areas). Nations which belong to the same group do not all pass through the same stages. Some of them skip a stage—Russia that of bourgeois democracy, Western Europe that of Stalinism.

The so-called dialectic of social history results from the transformation of reality into an idea. Each régime is sharply defined, and a unique principle is ascribed to it: the principle of capitalism is opposed to that of feudalism or that of socialism. Finally, it is suggested that régimes are contradictory and that the transition from one to the other is comparable to the transition from thesis to antithesis. This is to commit a double error. Régimes are different and not contradictory, and the so-called intermediary forms are more frequent and more durable than the pure forms. Supposing the principle of capitalism to be connected to that of feudalism as 'nothingness' is to 'being' or Spinozism to Cartesianism. there is nothing to guarantee that the accidental determinism will fulfil this intelligible necessity. Supposing that socialism reconciles feudalism and capitalism as 'becoming' reconciles 'being' and 'nothingness', the advent of the synthesis is not predictable in the same way as a nuclear explosion or the trade cycle.

On the plane of events, there is no automatic selection which conforms with our moral requirements. The search for an intelligible interpretation superior to that of accidental determinism, to the plurality of imperatives at present contradictory, is legitimate. But this search does not imply an act of faith whereby the future must be made to conform to the decrees of reason. Humanity may be swept away tomorrow by a cosmic catastrophe, as one's

pen may fall from one's hand at any moment. The Christian looks to divine mercy for his salvation. From whom can humanity without God expect an assurance of collective salvation?

Revolutionaries tend to exaggerate both the margin of their freedom and the power of destiny. They imagine that prehistory will end with them, that the proletariat, transfigured by its struggle, will give human societies a new look. Uplifted by their faith beyond the humdrum lessons of wisdom, they expect perpetual peace to flower from unlimited violence. They proclaim the inevitability of their triumph, because the cause which embodies so much hope cannot possibly fail. As time passes, as they in their turn assume the burden of power, as the immemorial essence of human collectivities reasserts itself through all the upheavals, confidence is corroded by disillusionment. As belief in the classless society begins to wane, they must profess to believe more and more in the necessity which mocks mankind and its futile struggles. Once the mainstay of optimism, belief in destiny becomes the alibi of resignation.

Fanatical in hope or fanatical in despair, the revolutionaries continue to ratiocinate about an inevitable future—a future that they are incapable of describing but which they claim to be able to foretell.

There is no law, either human or inhuman, which can direct the chaos of events to a definite end, be it radiant or horrific.

THE CONTROL OF HISTORY

"**H**ISTORY is again on the move": this phrase of Toynbee's responds to a strange and overwhelming feeling that each of us has had at some point in his life. I, myself experienced it on a visit to Germany in 1930 when I witnessed the first successes of National Socialism. All was again in the melting-pot, the structure of States as well as the balance of power in the world: the unpredictability of the future appeared to me as obvious as the impossibility of maintaining the *status quo.*

Historical awareness was not born with the catastrophes of our time. The bourgeois Europe of the end of the last century, confident in its destiny, practised the methods of criticism just as strictly as the war-torn Europe of today. It may not have known about all the dead cities which we have dug up from the sands, it may not have probed as deep into the history of past deities and buried civilisations, but it knew as well as we do how societies were begotten, born and died, the fatal doom which struck Athens, Rome and Byzantium in turn.

This knowledge remained more often than not detached. Western historians, fifty years ago, would never have affirmed that national States or parliamentary régimes might escape the corruption which gnaws at all the edifices raised up by the pride of men in defiance of the law of historical development. They nevertheless believed either that the new age was in a special position—that it was unlike any that had come before in being firmly based on Science—or that there was a possibility of postponing decay. It is easy to admit that no temporal city is assured of eternity, difficult to visualise the collapse of one's own.

The philosophies of history in the twentieth century owe their prestige and success to the events which we have witnessed. One cannot live through the Thirty Years' War or the Peloponnesian War or, least of all, the two world wars of 1914 and 1939, without asking oneself about their causes and consequences. One seeks, in a slightly disingenuous way, to give them a meaning—not in the positive sense of establishing the main facts in order to understand what in fact happened, but a meaning that will provide an excuse for all the accumulated horrors. Wars are less revolting to the observer who manages to convince himself that since they are born of capitalism they will disappear with it. The massacres which accompany the struggle of States and

of classes will not have been in vain if they clear the way to the classless society. The idolatry of history is born of this unavowed nostalgia for a future which would justify the unjustifiable. The fall of Rome convinced St. Augustine that one could not expect from mortal cities what belonged only to the City of God. The decline of Europe has prompted our contemporaries to take up the predictions of Marx as adapted for our time by the Leninist-Stalinist technique of action— unless, after the fashion of Toynbee, they begin by following the path of Spengler and find their way back by a tortuous route to the shrine of St. Augustine.

History is made by men who act, in circumstances which are not of their own choosing, according to their ambitions or ideals and their imperfect knowledge, sometimes succumbing to their environment, sometimes conquering it, bowed down under the weight of immemorial customs or uplifted by a spiritual force. At first glance, it seems at once a chaos of events and a tyrannical whole; each fragment is significant and the whole devoid of meaning. Both the science and the philosophy of history, although in a different way, attempt to overcome the contradictions between the intentional character of the rudimentary fact, related to the actor, and the apparent absurdity of the whole, between the intelligible disorder on the microscopic level and the blind order of fate.

Philosophies of history of the Marxist type bring order to the chaos of events by relating it to a few simple principles of interpretation, and postulating an irresistible movement towards the fulfilment of human destiny. Classes obey their interests, individuals their passions, but the forces and relations of production call forth from this anarchic confusion the procession of régimes, inexorable but also beneficent since the classless society will be its inevitable outcome.

At this point what we call the idolatry of history raises its ugly head, a caricature of historical awareness. The latter teaches us respect for the facts, innumerable and incoherent, and the multiplicity of meanings which they possess or that one can ascribe to them according to whether one relates them to individual actors or crystallised traditions or the consequences they have developed. The idolatry of history arrogates to itself the right to ignore the brute facts or to give each of them the meaning which will fit in with an allegedly definitive system of interpretation. This does not necessarily lead to the paranoiac universe of the Trials, but carries the risk of setting up the victors as judges of the vanquished, the State as the sole witness of the truth. The West, in its turn, is affected by this frenzy: convinced of the radical

perversity of Communism, the American legislators condemn the Communists of the Thirties in terms of the Fifties. The accused, in Russian or Chinese prisons, are forced to write their autobiographies; candidates for visas to the United States have to summarise their past lives. In the United States, of course, the replies concern the facts, while the autobiographies of 'capitalists' on the other side of the Iron Curtain must modify the facts according to the values imposed by their captors.

Historical awareness shows up the limits of our knowledge. Whether we look towards the past or attempt to divine the future, we cannot achieve a certainty which is incompatible with the gaps in our information and, even more, with the very essence of historical development. The global movements which we unravel from the tangled skein of causes and effects did in fact occur, but one cannot say that global causes predetermined them. After the event, it is permissible to forget the accidental nature of determinism; one cannot forget it when one is placed before the event.

Historical awareness teaches us respect for others, even when we fight them. It teaches us that the quality of causes cannot be measured by that of souls, that we cannot know what the outcome of our struggles will be, that each régime creates an order of values and the reconciliation of all values is merely an idea, not a practical objective. The idolatry of history, on the other hand, convinced that it acts with a view to achieving the only future which is worth while, sees, and wants to see, the *other* merely as an enemy to be eliminated, and a contemptible enemy at that since he is incapable of wanting the good or of recognising it.

Consideration of the past will not in itself produce the ultimate meaning of history. Neither the beauty of the cosmos nor the decline and fall of civilisations offers an answer to the question that we cry out to the heavens. One cannot know mankind if one does not follow the development of his laborious conquests, and tomorrow will bring us a lesson we did not know before. Perhaps one must have seen the statues in the vaults of Elephanta in order to grasp the true, unique significance of the statuary of Rheims. One must certainly have looked at the West from Tokyo or Bombay in order to wake from the complacent European trance of self-deception. In the absence of dialogue with others, we cannot become truly aware of ourselves in our historical being. When it comes to the final truths, however, dialogue does no more to relieve our uncertainty than monologue. The resurrection of the whole of the past tells us no more about our destiny than the examination of our own conscience. Deserted cities submerged by primeval forests, the

heroism of warriors who never died in vain since they affirmed their humanity face to face with death, the voice of the prophets heralding good tidings or divine punishment, the fury of the mob, the purity of the saints, the fervour of believers—nothing that historical knowledge reveals to us can settle finally the alternative between the Kingdom of God and the earthly city. Spengler and Toynbee were convinced in advance, the one that man is a beast of prey, the other that he is made to worship God and to be united with Him.

If one decides in favour of the earthly city, the identification of-the end which conforms to our wishes and ideals with the end which is inevitable collapses straight away, since it postulates a sort of Providence. One can imagine abstractly the conditions whereby the respect due to each individual would not be incompatible with the prosperity of all, but one cannot know whether the future will fulfil this hope.

Each generation tends to believe that its own aims are entirely original and unprecedented and that they represent the ultimate aims of humanity. This vanity is better than the indifference to the humdrum necessities of living which arises from the conviction that all aims are equally futile. Nevertheless, in a time like ours, it is charged with potentialities of fanaticism.

The outcome of a struggle between two vast empires is controlled by an accidental determinism the detail of which eludes us. Let us suppose that private ownership is doomed by the technique of production, that the mechanism of the market might some day be paralysed by the amount of capital to be invested or by the revolt of the masses; the socialism foreseeable in such a case would not be identifiable with the present or future practices of Soviet Communism. The type of private ownership called in question by the development of the forces of production is in fact no longer operative in Detroit any more than in Kharkov. The issue involved in a historical struggle more often than not eludes prognostication. Those who would understand decisions which have become crystallised into historical fact seize on an accidental determinism because reality itself permits of no other. Action turned towards the future belongs to the same order of probability.

The laws according to which régimes succeed one another do not even retain any verisimilitude in the Stalinist version of Marxism. The latter, in effect, admits that societies do not all go through the same phases, that the building up of socialism does not always come at the same point in economic development but begins immediately after the seizure of power, which is itself subject to innumerable accidents. Stalinism, which claims to be based

on a universal history, finally boils down to the history of the Bolshevik Party.

As the concept of the classless society wears thinner, and the dialectic loses both the rationale of successive contradictions successively overcome and the necessity of a causal sequence, another idea introduces itself into the Communist system of thought—that of human action triumphing over historical accidents as over cosmic forces. Having harnessed atomic energy and being perhaps on the way to harnessing solar energy, why should not the human intelligence succeed in eliminating both the hazards which have so often changed the course of events and the follies which disfigure the face of societies? Two types of mind are sensitive to the Marxist message, the Christians and the polytechnicians. The former perceive in it the echo of ancient prophesies, the latter the affirmation of a promethean pride—the future will fulfil the destiny of mankind because man himself will mould it.

The concept of action was already present in the philosophy of the young Marx. Through action, man has created himself by transforming Nature. Through action, the proletariat will become worthy of its mission by overthrowing capitalism. The action of the proletariat is fitted into the dialectic of régimes: a product of capitalism, the working class rises up against the social conditions of exploitation. But victory will only be won when the forms of the future society have matured in the womb of the old society. According to the different interpreters, the accent could be put either on the determinism which controls the transformation of economico-social structures, or on the revolt of the working class.

The substitution of the party for the class, virtually realised by Lenin before 1917, was to upset the balance in favour of action. When there is an extreme disproportion between the development of the class and the strength of the party, the chances of the Revolution depend much more on the latter than on the former.

The laws of history are still invoked in favour of the party; it is still suggested that the party owes its acumen and success to its knowledge of history. Yet the Bolshevik rulers, like all statesmen, have often been wrong in their most important prognostications: for years after 1917 they believed in the inevitability of revolution in Germany, they did not believe Chiang Kai-shek would return in 1926, they did not foresee either the German attack in 1941 or, in 1945, the imminent victory of the Chinese Communists. Doubtless their adversaries have been even blinder than they: the balance-

sheet of the past half-century is not exactly reassuring. However this may be, the Communists have had no knowledge at their disposal which was not also available to the bourgeois countries. The laws of predetermined evolution serve not so much to orientate as to justify their actions.

There was no need, after 1918, to have read *Das Kapital* or *Imperialism, the Final Stage of Capitalism* in order to recognise the inter-connection between class conflicts in Western countries, the rivalries of the great powers and the revolt of the colonial territories of Asia and Africa against their European overlords. The doctrine teaches that these conflicts must lead to socialism, but it does not specify when or how; it simply describes a historical situation on which human action endeavours to impose an outcome which no objective law either ordains or excludes.

The Party took over the Revolution which the dialectic of capitalism still showed no signs of provoking and which reformist trade unionism threatened to forestall. In the same way, the State decided to collectivise agriculture which, left to itself, was creating kulaks by the million. Ministers of Education and Propaganda were irresistibly tempted to accomplish by decree what, according to their version of historical materialism, should have happened spontaneously. They decided to *provoke* the literature and the philosophy which, according to the doctrine, should have flowered spontaneously in a budding socialist society. From the apparently scientific proposition that all art and thought are the product of the historical environment, we proceed to the principle of despotism: society, in the expression given to it by the State, imposes an orthodoxy on economists, novelists and even musicians. Since art has been corrupted by bourgeois civilisation, it will be saved by socialist realism.

But that is not all. Man himself, we are told, will be regenerated by the change in his conditions of life. But the continued use of typical capitalistic methods adapted to man's eternal egoism—piece-work wages, for example, and profit incentives for managers—hardly suggests that the new man is a spontaneous birth. Once again, the rulers must encourage the recalcitrant species, the 'engineers of the soul' will accelerate the unfolding of the dialectic. Education, propaganda, ideological training, campaigns against religion— every possible means is used in an attempt to model individuals according to the Communist idea of man and his situation on this earth. Pavlov and the theory of conditioned reflexes take over where Marx and the theory of historical materialism left off. It was thought that the religious sentiment would die a natural death as the gap was gradually reduced

between society as it ought to be and society as it is. In fact, 'reflexology' does not solve the riddle of existence any more than materialistic sociology takes into account the survival or the revival of faith among the emancipated proletarians or the well-fed bourgeois. Once again, the failure of science prepares the way for despotic action. Ministers, commissars, theorists, interrogators, armed with the Pavlovian method, will try to make men what they would spontaneously be if the official philosophy were true.

More than anything else, the Trials illustrate this transposition from false science to tyrannical action. As we have seen, one can reconstruct the world of accused and accusers in its historical setting according to a conception at once absolutist and relativist—the unconditional validity of the final goal, the truth of explanatory concepts, the understanding of actions detached from the intentions of the actors and from the circumstances, all seen through the eyes of the victor. But this interpretation, pushed to its logical conclusion, is strictly meaningless and the victims submit to it without believing in it. The accused do not voluntarily play the part which is ascribed to them; they are subject to threats and blackmail; their surrender is only dragged out of them by depriving them of food and of sleep; they are made to confess in the same way as dogs are made to salivate. To the philosopher, the content of the confessions recalls Hegel; to the psychologist it recalls Pavlovian experiments. One does not know to what extent the desire to persuade the heathens or the heretics to confess the truth is mixed up, in the minds of the inquisitor-experimenters, with the conviction that in the last analysis the accused must end up by capitulating because they are all more or less intelligent apes.

We have moved far from the realm of historical Providence, from the inflexible laws which condition the unfolding of the human drama. But the stages in the process leading from the vainglorious illusion which claims to *hold the key* to the future, to the ambition to *mould* the future in the light of the truth, are perfectly logical. A single class is the instrument of the redemption of all; the few men who claim to be its authentic representatives treat the rest of humanity as a means and regard all circumstances, favourable or not, simply as occasions for furthering their purpose. Having progressed from opposition to power, they place the same intransigent ardour at the service of socialist construction. The liquidation of the kulaks or the deportation of minorities become mere episodes, painful but unimportant, in a policy aimed at the realisation of Reason in History.

Those who aspire to command history seem to dream either of eliminating the intervention of accidents, of great men and chance encounters, or of

rebuilding society according to a global plan and discarding the heritage of unjustifiable traditions, or of putting an end to the conflicts which divide humanity and deliver it up to the tragic irony of war. Reason teaches us precisely the opposite—that politics will always remain the art of the irrevocable choice by fallible men in unforeseen circumstances and semi-ignorance. Every impulse towards global planning is doomed to end in tyranny.

The representation of an intelligible universe has been shattered by the manipulation of physical phenomena with the aid of technology. Contrariwise, the hope of a manipulation of history seems to have been born of the representation of a social order or an order of development, determined by laws which are inaccessible to the desires or the aversions of individuals. The revolutionaries imagined that they were going to control, not a few elements merely, but the whole.

This promethean ambition is one of the intellectual origins of totalitarianism. Peace will return to the world when, with the experience of government, the fading of fanaticism, and the realisation of all the insurmountable obstacles, the revolutionaries will admit that one cannot either reconstitute societies according to a plan, or postulate a unique objective for the whole of humanity, or refuse people the right to reject the earthly city.

Politicians have not yet discovered the secret of avoiding violence. But violence becomes even more inhuman when it believes itself to be in the service of a truth which is at once historical and absolute.

PART THREE

THE ALIENATION OF THE INTELLECTUALS

CHAPTER VII

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THEIR HOMELAND

EVERY society of the past has had its *scribes,* who made up the clerical staff of public or private administrations, its *artists* or *men of letters,* who handed on or perhaps enriched the heritage of culture, and its *experts,* either jurists who put their knowledge of the law and the art of disputation at the disposal of the rulers, or scientists who deciphered the secrets of Nature and taught men how to cure sickness or to win battles. None of these three species belongs strictly to our modern civilisation, but the latter has none-the-less its own special characteristics which affect the numbers and the status of the intellectuals.

The distribution of manpower among the different professions alters with the progress of economic development: the percentage of manpower employed in industry grows, the proportion employed in agriculture decreases, while the size of the so-called tertiary sector, which includes a multitude of professions of varying degrees of prestige—from the quill-driver in his office to the research worker in his laboratory—is enormously inflated. Modern industrial societies comprise a greater number of non-manual workers, absolutely and relatively, than any society of the past. Organisation, technique and administration increase in complexity as if to reduce to a perfect simplicity the motions of the manual worker.

The modern economy also requires proletarians who can read and write. As they become less impoverished, collectivities devote more and more money to the education of the young: secondary training lasts longer, and is extended to a wider section of every new generation.

The three categories of non-manual workers—*scribes, experts* and *men of letters*—develop simultaneously, if not at the same rate. Bureaucracies offer outlets to *scribes* with inferior qualifications; the management of labour and the organisation of industry require more and more specialised *experts;* schools, universities, the various mediums of entertainment or communication, employ *men of letters, artists,* or mere technicians of speech and writing, hacks and popularisers. Sometimes involvement in these

enterprises degrades the scholar or man of letters into a second-rate expert: the writer becomes a 'rewriter'. Though its significance is not always fully recognised, the growth in the number of jobs remains a crucial fact which is evident to all.

Experts and *men of letters* did not always constitute quasi-republics, jealous of their independence. For centuries they were spiritually inseparable from the clergy, from those whose function it was to maintain or interpret the beliefs of the Church and the realm. Socially, they were dependent on those who provided them with their means of livelihood— the Church, the rich and powerful, and the State. The meaning of art, and not merely the situation of the artist, altered with the source of authority or the characteristics of the cultivated class. The arts produced *by* and *for* believers were very different from those patronised by secular rulers or merchant princes.

In our day, scientists possess an authority and prestige which shield them from the pressure of the Churches (the exceptions are rare and on the whole insignificant). Freedom of enquiry, even in matters which affect the dogma, is scarcely contested. As the public grows and patrons disappear, writers and artists gain in freedom what they risk losing in security —and even this is offset by the fact that many of them are able to earn their living in a profession unconnected with their creative work. Of course, neither private employers nor the State are liable to pay without demanding a *quid pro quo;* but film companies or universities, for example, do not impose their orthodoxy outside the studios or the lecture rooms.

Finally, every political régime offers opportunities to those who possess the ability to manipulate words and ideas. It is no longer the military man, relying on courage or good luck, who accedes to the throne, but the orator, the man who knows how to convince the crowd or the electorate or parliament, the doctrinaire who has elaborated a system of thought. There has never been any lack of scholars or writers to lend their talents to justifying a régime, but in our day governments need experts in the art of speech. The theorist and the propagandist meet in one man; the secretary-general of the party elaborates the doctrine at the same time as he guides the revolution.

On the Intelligentsia

More numerous, more emancipated, more influential, nearer the centre of power—such, in our day, does the social category which we vaguely

designate by the term 'intelligentsia' seem to have become. The variety of definitions applied to it are in certain respects revealing; they help to unravel the heterogeneous characteristics of the species.

In the widest sense it is made to cover all non-manual workers. In France or in England, no-one would call an office worker an intellectual, even if he has been to a university and obtained a degree. Integrated into a collective enterprise, reduced to the function of an operative, the university graduate is no more than a labourer whose tool is his typewriter. The qualifications required in order to earn the title of intellectual grow higher as the number of non-manual workers increases—in other words, they are proportionate to economic development. In backward countries, any university graduate passes for an intellectual—and in a sense the term is not inaccurate: a young Arab who comes to study in France does in fact take up, vis-à-vis his own compatriots, attitudes which are typical of the man of letters: the 'ruritanian' ex-student resembles the Western writer.

A second and narrower definition would include *experts* and *men of letters* only. The frontier between 'scribes' and experts is somewhat vague: there is a continuous movement from one category to the other. Certain experts, such as doctors, remain independent—members of what are known as the liberal professions. The distinction between 'self-employed' and 'wage-earning', which sometimes influences ways of thinking, is nevertheless secondary: doctors who work for the State health services do not cease to be intellectuals (if they have ever been) simply because they receive a salary. Does the real distinction perhaps concern the nature of the non-manual work? The engineer or the doctor is at grips with inorganic nature or living phenomena, the writer or the artist with words or with a substance which he moulds in accordance with an idea. In this case, lawyers or administrators, who manipulate words or men, would belong to the same category as writers or artists, whereas in fact they approximate more closely to the experts, engineers or doctors.

These ambiguities arise from the conjunction, in the concept of the intellectual, of several characteristics which are not always simultaneously present. The best way of clarifying the notion is to start from the hard-and-fast cases and work outwards to the more peripheral ones.

Poets, novelists, painters, sculptors and philosophers form the inner circle: they live by and for the exercise of the intellect. If the value of the activity is taken as the criterion, one would gradually descend the ladder from Balzac to Eugène Sue, from Proust to the authors of 'human interest' stories in the daily

papers. Artists who go on producing without developing new ideas or new forms, professors in their chairs, research workers in their laboratories, form the bulk of the community of knowledge and culture. Below them are the journalists of the press and the radio, who disseminate the ideas of others and are the communicating link between the big public and the elect. In this context, the nucleus of the category would be the creators, and its frontier would be the ill-defined zone where the popularisers cease to interpret and begin to mislead, where, bent only on success or money, slaves of the supposed tastes of their public, they become indifferent to the values they profess to serve.

The disadvantage of such an analysis is that it neglects two important considerations—on the one hand the social situation and source of income, and on the other the objective, theoretical or practical, of the professional activity. It is permissible, after the event, to call Pascal or Descartes—the one a member of a 'parliamentary' bourgeois family, the other a knight—intellectuals. One would not have dreamed of putting them into that category in the seventeenth century, because they were amateurs. Amateurs are no less intellectuals than professionals if one judges by the quality of the mind or the nature of the activity involved, but they are not socially definable by that activity.* In modern societies, the number of professions grows, the number of amateurs decreases.

In another sense, the professor of law seems to deserve the title of intellectual more than the barrister or solicitor, and the professor of political economy more than the journalist who comments on the subject. Is this because the latter is usually a wage-earner working for a capitalist enterprise, and the former an official? It would appear not, since in the first example the barrister is a member of a liberal profession and the professor a functionary. The professor seems to us more of an intellectual because he has no other objective but the maintenance, the transmission or the extension of knowledge for its own sake.†

These analyses do not permit us to choose, dogmatically, a single definition; they merely show how many definitions are possible. Either one regards the number of experts as one of the prime characteristics of industrial societies and consequently baptises with the name 'intelligentsia' the category of individuals who have acquired, in universities or technical schools, the qualifications needed for the exercise of techno-bureaucratic functions. Or one places writers, scholars, scientists and creative artists on the top rung of the intellectual ladder, teachers or critics on the second, popularisers or

journalists on the third, with the practitioners—doctors, lawyers, engineers—excluded from the category to the extent that they abandon themselves to the desire for practical achievement and lose interest in culture. In the Soviet Union, the tendency is towards the first definition: the technical intelligentsia is considered the true representative of the species and writers themselves are 'engineers of the soul'. In the West, the second definition would find more favour, though it would be narrowed further and in fact limited to those whose "principal occupation is to write, to teach, to preach, to appear on the stage or to practise art or letters."*

* In the France of the eighteenth century, the category of intellectuals is easily recognisable. Diderot, the Encyclopaedists, the 'philosophies', are intellectuals.

† These last two criteria, without being contradictory, are visibly divergent. The intelligentsia have been more and more recruited into practical service, administrative or industrial. It is among the pure scientists or scholars that the amateur species has survived.

The term intelligentsia seems to have been used for the first time in Russia during the nineteenth century: those who had been through a university and acquired a culture which was for the most part of Western origin constituted a small group external to the traditional class structure. They were recruited from the younger sons of aristocratic families and the sons of the bourgeoisie or even the better-off peasantry. Detached from the old society, they felt themselves united by the knowledge they shared and by the attitude they adopted towards the established order. All this, together with the new scientific spirit and liberal ideas, inclined them towards revolution.

In societies where modern culture developed spontaneously and progressively from the traditional soil, the break with the past was less abrupt. University graduates were not so clearly distinguishable from other social categories; they did not unconditionally reject the age-old structure of communal life. They were none-the-less accused, and they are still accused, of fomenting revolutions—an accusation which the left-wing intellectual would accept as a tribute, pointing out that without the revolutionaries' determination to transcend the present, the ancient abuses would still survive.

In a sense, the accusation is ill-founded. It is not true that intellectuals as such are hostile to all societies. The writers and scholars of old China 'defended and illustrated' the doctrine, more moral than religious, which put them in the front rank of their society and consecrated the hierarchy. Kings

and princes, crowned heroes and wealthy merchants, have always found poets (not necessarily bad ones) to sing their praises. Neither in Athens nor in Paris, neither in the fifth century before Christ nor in the nineteenth century of our era, did the writer or the philosopher incline spontaneously towards the party of the people, of liberty or of progress. Admirers of Sparta were to be met with in no small quantity within the walls of Athens, just as, in our day, admirers of the Third Reich or the Soviet Union could be met with in the cafés of the Left Bank.

* Crane Brinton, *The Temper of Western Europe* (Harvard: Oxford, 1954)

All doctrines, all parties—traditionalism, liberalism, democracy, nationalism, fascism, communism—have had and continue to have their oracles and their thinkers. In each camp, the intellectuals are those who transform opinions or interests into theories; by definition, they are not content merely to live, they want to *think* their existence.

There remains, nevertheless, a basis of truth in the hackneyed notion, which has been taken up in a more subtle form by certain sociologists (J. Schumpeter, for example), of the intellectuals as revolutionaries by profession.

The intelligentsia is never in theory and seldom in fact a completely closed community. Any privileged class which is defined by knowledge and the virtues of the intellect must subscribe to the belief in promotion by merit. Plato belonged to the aristocratic party, but he nevertheless affirmed that the slave was capable of learning mathematical truths. Aristotle did not deny the social necessity of slavery, but he undermined its foundations. He denied that each man occupied the place which conformed to his nature; and when he died he freed his slaves, who perhaps had not been born for slavery. In this sense, the professional intellectual finds it difficult not to admit a *de jure* democracy, though in doing so he may emphasise the more strongly a *de facto* aristocratism: only a minority can attain to the sphere in which he moves.

The recruitment of the intelligentsia varies in different societies. In China the system of examination seems to have allowed the promotion of the sons of peasants, though the frequency of such cases is debatable. In India the preeminence accorded to thinkers was not incompatible with the caste system and the maintenance of each individual in the condition in which he was born. In modern societies the university facilitates social advancement, while

in certain countries of South America or the Near East the military academies offer a similar path to promotion. Although the social origins of university graduates vary in Western countries—up to 1939, the undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge were recruited from a narrow social stratum, and those of French colleges rarely came from working-class or peasant families but often from petty bourgeois backgrounds —the intelligentsia is always socially broader and more open than the ruling class, and this democratisation tends to become more marked because industrial societies are in growing need of cadres and technicians. In the Soviet Union, the enlargement of the intelligentsia worked in the interests of the men in power, who were able to attribute to socialism what was in fact the necessary outcome of economic development. The same phenomenon threatens to undermine democratic régimes, if the sons of the lower classes, having passed through universities, hanker after radical social change instead of adhering to the system of values and of government created by the old ruling class. And this risk is all the greater in that the tendency to criticise the established order is, so to speak, the occupational disease of the intellectuals. The latter are always inclined to judge their country and its institutions by comparing present realities with theoretical ideals rather than with other realities—the France of today with their own idea of what France ought to be rather than with the France of yesterday. No human institution can stand up to such a test without suffering some damage.

The intellectual is the man of ideas and the man of science. He subscribes to a belief in Man and in Reason. The culture disseminated by the universities is optimistic and rationalist: the forms of communal life which present themselves for critical examination appear gratuitous, the arbitrary work of the centuries rather than the expression of a clear-sighted will or a considered plan. The intellectual is all too ready to pass a final judgment on the 'established disorder'.

The difficulty begins as soon as one ceases to restrict one's condemnation to the real. Logically, there appear to be three steps in the process. By *technical criticism,* one puts oneself in the place of those who govern or administer, one suggests measures which might attenuate the evils one deplores, one accepts the inevitable constraints of political action, the immemorial structure of collectivities, sometimes even the laws of the existing régime. One does not base oneself on idealistic premises, on a theoretical idea of a radiant future, but on results which are accessible given more common sense or goodwill. *Moral criticism* raises up against things as

they are the notion, vague but imperative, of things as they ought to be. It denounces the cruelties of colonialism, it denounces capitalist alienation, it denounces the antithesis of masters and slaves and the infamous juxtaposition of blatant luxury and dire poverty. Even if he has no idea of the consequences of this revolt or of the means of translating it into action, the moral critic feels incapable of not proclaiming it. Finally, there is *ideological* or *historical criticism,* which attacks the present society in the name of a society to come, which attributes the injustices which offend the human conscience to the very essence of the present order (capitalism and private ownership are inherently bound to produce exploitation, imperialism and war), and sketches out the blueprint of a radically different order, in which man will fulfil his true vocation.

Each of these criticisms has its function, its nobility; each also is threatened by a sort of degradation. The 'technicians' are dogged by the incorrigible nature of conservatism: men do not change, nor do the intractable necessities of communal life. The 'moralists' oscillate between *de facto* resignation and verbal intransigence: to say 'no' to everything is finally to accept everything. Where is the line to be drawn between injustices which are inseparable from present society or from any conceivable society, and the extortions and iniquities attributable to individuals, which belong to the sphere of ethical judgment? As for ideological criticism, it is quite prepared to play both sides. It is moralist against one half of the world, but accords to the revolutionary movement an indulgence that is realist in the extreme. Proof of guilt is never satisfactorily established when the court is an American one. Repression is never too excessive when it strikes at counterrevolutionaries. It is a system that conforms to the logic of human passions. How many intellectuals have come to the revolutionary party via the path of moral indignation, only to connive ultimately at terror and autocracy?

Every nation has its leaning towards one or other of these forms of criticism. The British and the Americans tend towards a combination of technical and moral criticism; the French oscillate between moral and ideological criticism (the debate between 'rebels' and 'revolutionaries' is a typical expression of this uncertainty). Perhaps moral criticism is as a rule the original source of all criticism, at least as far as the intellectuals are concerned—which earns them alike the glory of being 'righters of wrong' and opponents of compromise and the less flattering reputation of professional word-spinners who ignore the coarse realities and constraints of action.

It is a long time since criticism could be regarded as a proof of courage, at least in our free Western societies. The public prefers to find in its newspapers arguments which justify its resentments or its claims rather than motives for admitting that, in the given circumstances, the action of the government could not have been very different from what it was. In criticising, one evades responsibility for the unpleasant consequences entailed by a measure which may be desirable on the whole. The oppositionist, however violent his polemics, seldom suffers for his so-called heresies. To sign petitions on behalf of the Rosenbergs or against the rearming of Western Germany, to denounce the bourgeoisie as a mob of gangsters or regularly to take up a position in favour of the side against which France is preparing to defend herself—none of this damages the career even of a servant of the State. How often have the privileged taken to their bosoms the writers who execrated them! The Babbitts of America were to a great extent responsible for the success of Sinclair Lewis. The bourgeoisie and the sons of the bourgeoisie, denounced by the writers of yesterday as philistines, by those of today as capitalists, have been the salvation of the rebels and the revolutionaries. Success is to those who transfigure the past or the future: it is doubtful whether, in our day, it is possible with impunity to defend the moderate opinion that the present is in many respects neither better nor worse than any other period.

Politics and the Intelligentsia

When one observes the attitudes of intellectuals towards politics, one's first impression is that they are very similar to those of non-intellectuals. In the opinions of teachers or writers there is the same mixture of half-baked knowledge, of traditional prejudices, of preferences which are more aesthetic than rational, as in those of shopkeepers or industrialists. One famous novelist will vent his hatred on the conformist bourgeoisie from which he himself sprang; another, although his philosophy is quite incompatible with dialectical materialism, is belatedly attracted to the Soviet system, as almost all leftists have been at one stage or another.

When their professional interests are at stake, the associations of doctors, teachers or writers put their claims no less forcefully than the workers' trade unions. The cadres defend the hierarchy; the upper managerial strata of industry are often at odds with the capitalists and financiers. Intellectual civil servants regard the resources of other social categories as excessive. As State employees and recipients of fixed incomes, they are inclined to condemn the profit motive.

The attitudes of intellectuals can also be explained by reference to their social origins. In France, one has only to compare the intellectual climate of the different faculties— teachers as well as students—in order to realise this. The Ecole Normale Supérieure is Left or extreme Left, the Institut d'Etudes Politiques, apart from a small minority, is conservative or moderate. This has certainly something to do with the recruitment of the students. In the provincial universities, every faculty has its political reputation, those of medicine or law being usually considered 'more to the Right' than those of letters or science: in both cases, the teachers' social background and standard of living have some bearing on their political opinions.

Professional considerations may also play their part. The *Normaliens* of the Rue d'Ulm today look at political problems in terms of Marxist or existentialist philosophy. Hostile to capitalism and anxious to 'emancipate' the proletariat, they yet know little of either. The student of political science knows less about 'alienation' and more about how régimes function. (To a certain extent, the same remarks could be applied to the masters as to the students.) Inevitably, the professional intellectual transfers to the political sphere the habits of thought which he has acquired in the pursuit of his calling. For example, the exercise of medicine does not encourage an optimistic view of human nature: though often humanitarian, doctors are also concerned to safeguard their status as a liberal profession, and they regard the ambitions of the reformers with some scepticism.

Analyses such as these, which should be extended to compare the same professions in different countries or different specialists within each country, might lead eventually to a fully worked-out sociology of the intelligentsia. In the absence of this, however, it is still possible to indicate the circumstances which have a decisive influence on the attitude of intellectuals and to establish certain national peculiarities.

The situation of the intelligentsia can be defined by a double relationship, with the Church and with the ruling classes. The distant cause of the contrast between the ideological climate of the Anglo-Saxon countries and that of the Latin countries is clearly the success of the Reformation and the multiplicity of religious sects on the one side, and the failure of the Reformation and the power of Catholicism on the other.

Mediaeval Europe was equipped with 'clerks' rather than with intellectuals. Scholars and writers were for the most part attached to ecclesiastical institutions, which included the universities. Even when they were laymen,

university professors did not enter into competition with the servants of the spiritual power, which was established and recognised. The various categories of the modern intelligentsia developed gradually: jurists and officials were dependent on the monarchy; scientists had to fight for the right of free inquiry against a restrictive dogmatism; poets and writers, sprung from the bourgeoisie, sought the protection of the great and were able to live by their pens and by the favour of the public. Over the course of the centuries, there was a progressive evolution towards the secularisation of the intelligentsia, and today this is total. The combination in a single man of the functions of scientist (or philosopher) and priest would now be considered a freak. The conflict between the clergy and the intellectuals, or between the spiritual power of faith and that of reason, expired in a sort of reconciliation in the countries where the Reformation was successful. Humanitarianism, social reforms, political liberties did not appear to be incompatible with the Christian message. The annual congress of the British Labour Party opens with a prayer. In France, Italy and Spain, in spite of the Christian Democratic movements, the parties founded on the Enlightenment or on socialist ideas generally regard the Church as an enemy.

The relationship of the intellectuals to the ruling classes is a reciprocal one. The more remote they seem to be from the preoccupations of those who govern, administer or create wealth, the more do the latter give vent to their innate hostility and contempt for the 'word-spinners'. The more recalcitrant to modern ideas the privileged classes appear, the more incapable of ensuring the nation's power and economic progress, the more the intellectuals incline to dissidence. The prestige society accords to men of ideas also influences their judgments on the practical men.

Thanks to the double success of the Reformation and the Revolution, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the British intelligentsia never found itself in permanent conflict with the Church and the ruling class. It has, of course, regularly provided the necessary contingent of non-conformists without which orthodoxy would stifle all criticism of values and institutions. But its polemics have always been closer to factual experience and less inclined to metaphysics than those of the intellectual classes of the Continent, especially the French. British politicians and men of affairs have always been sufficiently self-confident not to feel any deep inferiority or hostility towards writers or scholars. And the latter, for their part, were never isolated from the rich and the powerful: they were given a place in the élite—not in the front rank—and they rarely dreamed of a total upheaval. Often they themselves

belonged to the ruling class. Demands for reform were met quickly enough for the politico-economic system itself not to be called in question.

In France, during the whole of the nineteenth century, the form of the State was never unanimously accepted; the debate between tradition and revolution was endlessly pursued. The intellectuals lapsed into a kind of habitual opposition, not only when parliamentary institutions were compromised by the monarchy but also when democratic principles were exploited by a Bonaparte or when the Republic appeared to be too favourable or too hostile to the socialists.

Thus in France any crisis whatsoever—that of 1934, for example, or that of 1940—is enough to revive old quarrels. Even Great Britain was shaken by the troubles of the 'thirties. There and in America the intellectuals, confronted with the economic crisis, experienced the temptations of revolutionary dissidence and the mirage of the Soviet paradise. But Communism and Fascism remained peripheral phenomena; whereas in France they were central issues, and once more the country and its humdrum problems were forgotten in the ideological delirium.

Every country has its own special tradition of political thinking. The same doctrines or the same ideological conglomerates are to be found in all Western countries—conservatism, liberalism, social Catholicism, socialism. But the distribution of ideas among the parties varies,* the political issues or philosophical bases are never the same. Economic liberalism—free trade and private enterprise—has been more tied up with social conservatism in France than in Great Britain, has tended more to obstruct social legislation than to liquidate antediluvian methods and concerns in agriculture and industry. On the other side of the Channel, the dissociation between democracy and liberalism, between Parliament and the Republic, has never been known. Certain ideas, analogous perhaps in their consequences, were variously developed, here in a vocabulary derived from a utilitarian philosophy, there in terms of an abstract rationalism with a Jacobin interpretation of the rights of man, elsewhere in Hegelian or Marxist language.

* Moreover, ideas often pass from one party to another. In 1815, 1840 and 1870 the right-wing parties were pacifist-minded, reluctant to fight to the last ditch. Revolutionary patriotism was flag-waving, bellicose. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the Left became pacifist and the Right nationalist. The attitudes of the Right and the Left to foreign

policy are frequently reversed. In face of Hitlerism, the Right was Munich-minded and collaborationist; in face of Stalinism, the Left.

From yet another angle, the intellectuals are closely linked to the national community: they *live* their country's destiny in a particularly acute form. The vast majority of German intellectuals under the Hohenzollern empire were loyal to the régime. The university graduates, who occupied a high place in the hierarchy of prestige, were anything but revolutionaries. With few exceptions they were indifferent to the form of government, whether monarchy or republic—a question which passionately absorbed their French colleagues. Conscious of the social problems which were rendered more acute in Germany than in France by the speed of industrialisation, they sought reformist solutions within the imperial capitalist framework. Marxists were few in the universities and were mainly recruited among the marginal intelligentsia. Since the writers and artists, unlike the French, occupied an inferior status to that of the professors, they were probably less integrated with the régime. Especially typical of the contrast between the two countries were the nationalist tendencies of most of the German teaching profession and the leftist opinions of most of the French.

Later, the dissidence of a large proportion of the German intelligentsia under the Weimar Republic was due to a quasiaesthetic hostility to a drab and colourless régime directed by men of the people or of the petty bourgeoisie, and above all to the humiliation caused by the country's defeat. The worker and the peasant resent any blow to their country's independence and prosperity, the intellectual is more sentitive to the oscillations of national prestige. He may believe himself to be indifferent to wealth or power, but he is never indifferent to national glory, for the scope and influence of his work partly depends on it. As long as his country controls the big battalions, he pretends to ignore this connection, but he finds it difficult to resign himself when the Spirit of History, and with it the centre of power, has emigrated to another clime. The intellectuals are more pained than simpler mortals by the hegemony of the United States.

The influence of the nation's fate on the attitude of the intelligentsia sometimes exerts itself in the economic sphere. Unemployment, lack of promotion, the intransigence of the older generation or of foreign masters—to all this the intellectuals as a whole react more passionately than the other social categories, because they have higher ambitions and more extensive means of action. They are filled with genuine indignation at the injustice,

poverty and oppression of which other men are victims: how could they possibly remain silent when they themselves are directly affected?

In the twentieth century, revolutionary situations will always crop up wherever there are frustrated, unemployed ex-students. In Germany the great depression, supervening ten years after the defeat, brought out into the streets scores of thousands of candidates for semi-intellectual jobs, and a revolution of some kind seemed the only possible outcome. The monopolising of jobs by Frenchmen in Tunisia and Morocco nourished the bitterness of Arab graduates from French universities and swept them irresistibly to revolt.

Wherever the old ruling classes—landowners, rich traders, tribal chiefs—preserve a quasi-monopoly of power and wealth, the discrepancy between what the rationalist culture of the West promises and what reality offers, between the aspirations of the intellectual young and their opportunities, gradually arouses passions which circumstances inexorably steer and impel, against colonial domination or against reaction, towards a national or a Marxist revolution.

Even the industrial societies of the West are imperilled when disgruntled experts in search of practical action and soured *literati* in search of an Idea unite against a régime which is guilty of failing to inspire either patriotic pride or the inward satisfaction of sharing in a great collective enterprise. Maybe the result of their activities will not exactly live up to their expectations: in that case the ideologists can buy a relative security by singing the praises of the rulers, while the polytechnicians console themselves by building power stations.

The Intellectuals' Paradise

France is considered to be the paradise of the intellectuals, and French intellectuals tend to be revolutionaries: the conjunction of these two facts seems rather paradoxical.

English writers of the *avant-garde,* whose names are probably unknown in the House of Commons, are overcome with rapture when they come to Paris and settle down in Saint Germain-des-Prés. They at once develop a passionate interest in politics, a subject the dispiriting sobriety of which at home discourages their attention. And indeed the discussions they will hear in Paris are elaborated with a subtlety that cannot but enthral those who live by the mind. The last article of Jean-Paul Sartre is a political event, or at least it

is greeted as such by a circle of people which, though narrow, is convinced of its own importance. The political ambitions of successful French novelists collide with the literary ambitions of French statesmen, who dream of writing novels just as the others dream of becoming Ministers.

It will be said that this impression is a superficial one, that this paradise is reserved for the tourist trade. There are few intellectuals who manage to live by their pens. Schoolteachers and university professors have to make do on meagre salaries, scientists work in ill-equipped laboratories. One may speculate on the case of an intellectual, rich in glory and in royalties, who nevertheless places his pen at the service of an ill-defined revolution, but one forgets all those who are embittered by the contrast between the profits (undeclared) of business men, shopkeepers, surgeons and lawyers and the modesty of their own condition.

The intellectuals are no less sensitive than other Frenchmen to economic worries. There are writers who imagine that State editions would increase the sales of their books; there are scientists who imagine that a Communist régime would offer them unstintingly the instruments of labour which the Republic begrudges them. Others cast their eyes longingly across the Atlantic, where certain specialists of the written word, whom one would hesitate to call intellectuals, achieve considerable incomes.* The generosity of the big firms, who transform a literary talent into a valued commodity, or the generosity of the State, unique patron of the arts and sciences, may well arouse envy among the intellectuals of a country which is too small for either its capitalists or the treasury to scatter such largesse.

* Writers on *Time* magazine can receive up to $30,000 a year.

Yet I doubt whether this sort of explanation touches the heart of the matter. The gap between the wage of a skilled worker and the salary of a university professor is at least as great in France, and probably greater, than in the United States. That the more exalted forms of literary activity can earn less money than the inferior forms is not a specifically French phenomenon. Those who devote themselves to genuinely creative work—whether scientists, philosophers, poets or serious novelists—enjoy real prestige and an almost total freedom. Why do so many intellectuals take exception to a society which provides them with an honourable standard of living (considering the collective resources of the country), puts no impediments in their way, and proclaims that the works of the mind represent the supreme values?

The ideological tradition of the rationalist and revolutionary Left provides a truer explanation of the terms in which the dissidence of the French intelligentsia expresses itself. Most of the intellectuals who take an interest in politics are embittered because they feel they have been defrauded of what was their due. Whether docile or rebellious, they seem to be preaching in the wilderness. The Fourth Republic, submitted to the erratic directives of a parliamentary personnel without a common doctrine, to the contradictory demands of different pressure groups, is discouraging both to the loyalists and to the rebels. It is rich in negative virtues, conservative in the face of a changing world.

The régime is not alone responsible for the apparent divorce between intellect and action. Intellectuals in France seem to be more integrated into the social order than they are elsewhere because people think only of Parisian circles where the novelist may occupy a position equal or superior to that of the statesman. Writers with no authority whatsoever can obtain large audiences even when they treat of subjects about which they quite openly boast of knowing nothing—a phenomenon which is inconceivable in the United States, in Germany or in Great Britain. The tradition of the *salon,* presided over by women or dilettantes, has been allowed to survive in a century of technology. A general culture may still allow one to dissertate agreeably on politics, but it is no protection against silliness and it does not equip one for recommending precise reforms. In a sense, the intelligentsia is less geared to political action in France than anywhere else.

In the United States, in Great Britain, even in Germany, ideas and personnel never cease to circulate between the economists and the managerial circles of banking and industry, between these and the higher ranks of the civil service, between the serious press, the universities and the government. Most French business men have never met an economist, and until recently they tended—confidentially—to despise the species. French civil servants are totally indifferent to the advice of scholars, and journalists have few contacts with either. Nothing is more conducive to a nation's prosperity than the exchange of knowledge and experiences between universities, editorial staffs, the civil service and parliament. Politicians, trade union leaders, industrialists, university professors and journalists need neither be mobilised into a single party which has a monopoly of power, nor cut off from one another by ignorance and prejudice. In this respect, no other ruling class is as badly organised as the French.

The French writer does not condemn his rulers for neglecting the teachings of political or economic science. Rather does he condemn American civilisation for despising scholars and thinkers as such and employing intellectuals merely as experts. On the other hand, the economist or the sociologist bewails the fact that our politicians are more susceptible to the appeals of vested interests than to impartial consultation. Both parties end up by uniting, unattached, irresponsible, drunk with indignation, in favour of a Revolution which for one boils down to a major effort towards increased productivity and for the other blossoms out into a transformation of history.

The loss of power, wealth and prestige is common to all the nations of the Old World. France and Great Britain came out of the two world wars as impoverished as Germany which was twice defeated. The superiority of wealth per head of population and of potential power in the United States would in any case have been added to its natural demographic superiority. Nevertheless, without the two wars of the twentieth century, France and Great Britain would have continued to cut a considerable figure in the world, and to finance their imports without much difficulty thanks to their external investments. At the present day, threatened by a continental empire at their very doorsteps, they find it difficult to live without external aid and feel incapable of defending themselves alone, while the gap between American and European productivity seems to grow wider instead of narrower. How could the Europeans be expected to forgive those who have benefited from the consequences of their follies—if one can regard a position of hegemony as an enviable one? Even if the Americans were above reproach, the Europeans would find it difficult not to resent a rise which was the counterpart of their own decline. Mercifully, the Americans are not above reproach.

It is quite normal for the leading nation to be black-guarded by the others. Great Britain was never much liked at the time when she dominated the world. British diplomacy has regained some prestige since the end of the Second World War, now that she no longer takes the major decisions and has adopted the role of critic, adviser and referee, exercising a sort of veto and taking advantage, in her negotiations with the Communist camp, of the respect inspired in Moscow and Peking by American strength. The disparity between the actual behaviour of America and the European version of her actions requires another explanation. Broadly speaking, postwar United States diplomacy has conformed with the desires, both negative and positive, of the Europeans. By means of massive gifts and loans America has contributed to

the economic recovery of the Old World; she has made no unilateral attempt to liberate the countries of Eastern Europe; she reacted immediately to the North Korean aggression but refused to accept either the risks or the sacrifices involved in all-out war, and she was not tempted to save the French in Indo-China. The only two precise complaints against her are the crossing of the 38th Parallel—a decision which could still be justified—and the failure to recognise Peking—an error of minor significance.

Fundamentally, the strategy of the United States has not been so very different, as far as actions are concerned, from the secret wishes of the majority of Europeans, intellectuals included. What then are the grievances, or the unconscious motives of the grievances? I can observe three, in progressive order of importance. First of all, the United States, obsessed by hatred and fear of Communism, has sometimes gone so far as to support 'feudal or reactionary' governments (in this connection, there is a well-orchestrated propaganda ready to call any militant anti-Communist a 'puppet' or 'reactionary'). Secondly, the United States, by virtue of the fact that she possesses a stock of atomic bombs, has become symbolically responsible for the possibility of a third world war. (But when M. Khrushchev boasted that the Soviet Union had been the first to perfect the hydrogen bomb, his remark was not reported by the Communist news agencies: the Soviet Union works as hard as the United States on the development of nuclear weapons, but on the whole does not talk so much about it.) Finally—and this seems to me to be the decisive reason—the rulers of the United States are accused of accepting, and thereby helping to perpetuate, the division of the world into two opposing blocs: and this interpretation inevitably reduces the nations of Western Europe to a subordinate role.

It is not so long ago since Paris and London used to look down their noses at the nationalism of the central or eastern European intelligentsia, with jibes about 'Balkanisation' and so forth. Is the nationalism which has since insinuated itself into French left-wing circles so very different? Nations which call themselves great do not react any more reasonably to the decline in their power and prestige than the so-called small nations reacted to their sudden resurrection. No slogan is more popular than that of 'national independence', which is thrown around by the Communists. And yet there is no need for any special perspicacity to observe the fate of Poland or Czechoslovakia, or for any outstanding degree of intelligence to balance the military resources of France against the necessities of European defence. The French intellectual

who opposes any collective organisation of the diplomacy or the military resources of the West is no less antediluvian than the Polish intellectual who, between 1919 and 1939, jealously demanded freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre for his country. And moreover the latter, up to 1933, had the excuse of the weakness of the two great European powers, Germany and Russia.

This is not a piece of special pleading for the European Defence Community, whose intentions were better than its institutions. The objections to a six-power federal State are many and powerful. Conceivably, a case could even be made out in favour of a Europe protected by American strength without any strict treaty of alliance and without American contingents being billeted on the Rhine and the Elbe. But the intellectuals are not moved by such complex arguments: they are only interested in the idea of a Europe which, in appearance at least, will have regained its freedom of action. The emotions they experience are not in the least esoteric, not in the least alien to the rest of their compatriots. The man in the street is all too disposed to resentment against the too-powerful ally, all too prone to the bitterness arising from national weakness, to nostalgia for past glory and hope for a different and better future. But the intellectuals ought to restrain these popular emotions, ought to show the inescapable reasons for permanent solidarity and interdependence. Instead of fulfilling the role of guides, they prefer, especially in France,* to betray their mission, to encourage the ignorant feelings of the masses by adducing hypocritical justifications for them. In fact their quarrel with the United States is a way of rationalising their own guilt.

In most countries, the intellectuals are even more anti-American than the man in the street. Some of the outbursts of Sartre at the time of the Korean war or the Rosenberg case recall those of the Nazis against the Jews.† The United States is represented as the embodiment of everything most detested, and then all the resentment and hatred and gall which accumulates in people's hearts in a time of troubles is heaped on this symbolic figure.

* I am speaking of those who are neither avowed Communists nor fellow-travellers. The Communists do their job quite honestly on behalf of the Soviet Union.

† "On one point you're bound to win, because we do not wish to harm anyone: we refuse to turn into hatred the contempt and horror you arouse in us. But you will never get us to accept the execution of the Rosenbergs

as a 'regrettable incident' or even as a judicial error. It is a legal lynching which has covered a whole nation with blood and proclaimed once and for all your utter incapacity to assume the leadership of the Western world. . . .

"But now that you have yielded to your criminal folly, this same folly may fling us helter-skelter into a war of extermination. No-one in Europe had any doubts about it: according to whether you spared or executed the Rosenbergs, you were clearing the way either for peace or for world war. . . .

The quasi-unanimous attitude of the French intellectuals in connection with the Rosenberg case seems to me to be characteristic and yet rather strange. After the State tribunals of the Occupation and the Peoples' Courts of the Liberation, the French cannot claim to have a very acute sense of justice. The tender-hearted intellectuals of *Les Temps Modernes* or *Esprit* "were not in the least moved by the excesses of the postwar purge; in fact they were among those who complained of the lack of vigour shown by the provisional government in its repression of collaborationists. They have also invariably shown a sympathetic understanding of the kind of trials practised in the Soviet Union. Why then, in the Rosenberg case, did they affect an indignation similar to that which their grandfathers (quite sincerely) had shown at the time of the Dreyfus affair? These men who condemned 'reasons of State' and abhorred 'military justice' would have hesitated to take part in the Rosenberg campaign.* It was felt to be deplorable that a judge should have passed sentence of death for acts committed at a time when the Soviet Union was an ally and not an enemy. The long imprisonment made the execution more cruel and naturally aroused sympathy and compassion. But the judge's sentence, legally incontestable, called for regret or disapproval (if one subscribed to the jury's verdict), not the virulent denunciation of the moralist. The guilt of the Rosenbergs was at least extremely probable. Communist propaganda did not seize on the case until several months after the trial, when the leaders of the party realised that, for the first time, party militants accused of atomic espionage would deny to the very end having committed acts which any good Stalinist must regard as perfectly legitimate. This propaganda succeeded in transforming into a judicial error a sentence which was indeed harsh because it was influenced by the political atmosphere at the time of the trial without making any allowances for the climate of

opinion at the moment of the crime. The success of the campaign in France can be explained not so much by concern for justice or by the efficacy of psycho-technology as by the longing to discredit the United States.

"What can one say of a country whose leaders are forced to commit ritual murders in order to excuse themselves for stopping a war?

"And it's no good pretending that a few extremists or irresponsible elements are to blame: these men are the masters of your country, since it is for them that your Government yielded. Do you remember Nuremberg and your theory of collective responsibility? Well—it is to you that it should be applied today. You are collectively responsible for the death of the Rosenbergs, either because you provoked this murder or because you allowed it to be committed. You have allowed the United States to be the cradle of a new Fascism. It is no good your replying that this single murder is not comparable to the Hitlerian hecatombs: Fascism is not defined by the number of its victims, but by the way it kills them. . . .

"By killing the Rosenbergs, you have quite simply tried to put a stop to the progress of science by means of a human sacrifice. We are back in the age of black magic, witch-hunts, auto-da-fés and human sacrifices. Your country is sick with fear. You are frightened of everything—of the Soviets, of the Chinese, of the Europeans; you are frightened of one another: you are frightened of the shadow of your own bomb. . . .

"Meanwhile, do not be surprised if you hear us shouting from one end of Europe to the other: "Watch out, America has caught the rabies. We must cut ourselves off from he or else we'll be bitten and infected ourselves'."

("Les Animaux malades de la Rage", article in *Libération,* June 22, 1953.)

The paradox becomes even more extravagant when one remembers that in many respects the values invoked by the United States are scarcely distinguishable from those which her critics indefatigably proclaim. A low standard of living among the working class, social and economic inequality, economic exploitation and political oppression—such are the social vices which the left-wing intelligentsia ceaselessly denounces; and in opposition to these it recommends higher living standards, the attenuation of class differences, and the extension of individual and trade union liberties. The official ideology on the other side of the Atlantic is deeply imbued with this

ideal, and the defenders of the 'American way of life' can justly claim that their country has come at least as near (perhaps nearer) the goal as any other.

* In Britain, where men still cherish a sense of justice, the Communist campaign over the Rosenbergs was a failure.

Do the European intellectuals resent the general success of the United States in this respect, or do they resent its partial failure? Explicitly, they reproach the United States with the contradiction between its ideal and its reality, of which the fate of the negro minority is the most notorious example and the symbol. Yet, in spite of the deep-rooted American racial prejudice, discrimination is growing less severe and the condition of the negroes has steadily improved. The struggle in the American soul between the principle of human equality and the colour bar deserves to be treated with understanding. In fact the European Left has a grudge against the United States mainly because the latter has succeeded by means which were not laid down in the revolutionary code. Prosperity, power, the tendency towards uniformity of economic conditions—these results have been achieved by private initiative, by competition rather than State intervention, in other words by capitalism, which every well-brought-up intellectual has been taught to despise.

An empirical success, American society does not embody an historical idea. The simple, modest ideas which it continues to cultivate have gone out of fashion in the old world. The United States remains optimistic after the fashion of the European eighteenth century: it believes in the possibility of improving man's lot; it distrusts the power which corrupts; it is still basically hostile to authority, to the pretensions of the few to know all the answers better than the common man. There is no room there for the Revolution or for the proletariat—only for economic expansion, trade unions and the Constitution.

The Soviet Union purges and subjugates the intellectuals, but at least it takes them seriously. It was intellectuals who gave to the Soviet régime the grandiose and equivocal doctrine out of which the bureaucrats have developed a state religion. Even today, when discussing class conflicts or the relations of production, they savour at once the joys of theological argument, the austere satisfactions of scientific controversy, and the ecstatic thrill of meditation on universal history. The analysis of the American reality will never provide pleasures as rare as these. The United States does not persecute its intellectuals enough to enjoy in its turn the turbid attractions of terror; it

gives a few of them, temporarily, a prestige and a glory which can compete with that of the film stars or baseball players; but it leaves the majority in the shadows. Persecution is more bearable to the intelligentsia than indifference.

To this indifference another and better-founded grievance is added: the price of economic success often seems too high. The servitudes of industrial civilisation, the harshness of human relations, the power of money, the puritan elements *in* American society—all this offends the susceptibilities of the intellectual bred in the European tradition. Jumping to unfair conclusions, he attributes to the realities or rather to the words he does not like the cost (which is perhaps inevitable and probably only temporary) of economic progress and of the improvement of the workers' conditions. The vulgar magazines and digests or the productions of Hollywood are compared to the highest literary works which are enjoyed by the privileged few and not to the intellectual pabulum which used to be provided for the common man. The suppression of the private ownership of the instruments of production would not alter the vulgarity of the films or the radio.

There again, the intellectuals are more anti-American than the big public, which, in England at least, would be loth to dispense with American films. But why do the intellectuals not admit to themselves that they are less interested in the standard of living of the working class than in the refinements of art and life? Why do they cling to democratic jargon when in fact they are trying to defend authentically aristocratic values against the invasion of mass-produced human beings and mass-produced commodities?

The Intellectuals' Hell

Communication between French and American intellectuals is all the more difficult because their situation is in many respects diametrically opposed.

The number of university graduates or professional writers is higher in America than in France, both absolutely and relatively, since it increases with economic progress. But the typical representative of the American intelligentsia is not a scholar or writer* but an expert—an economist or sociologist. The Americans put their trust in the technician, not in the cultivated man. The division of labour, even in literary matters, has gradually extended its sway. Is the ladder of prestige on which the various non-manual professions range themselves different on the other side of the Atlantic from what it is in Great Britain? It is difficult, in the absence of precise

investigation, to answer this question with any certainty. The hierarchy, which in any case is difficult to establish, probably varies according to the different groups inside each country. Nevertheless, the simple, global fact remains that the novelist or philosopher, who holds the centre of the stage in France, does not impose the stamp of his personality or his vocabulary on the American intelligentsia.

If the Paris of the Left Bank is the writer's paradise, the United States might be regarded as the writer's hell. And yet the formula 'Back to America' might be written down as an epigraph to a history of the American intelligentsia in the last fifteen years. France exalts her intellectuals, who reject and despise her; America makes no concessions to hers, who nevertheless adore her.

In both cases the motive appears to be the same: the French react to the humiliation of their country, the Americans react to the grandeur of theirs, but both remain basically nationalist, whether in hankering after revenge or in rallying to the flag of glory. Curiously enough the same year, 1953, witnessed the outbreak in the United States of the 'egghead' controversy and the appearance in *Partisan Review* of the enquiry, *America and the Intellectuals.* The latter revealed the conversion to 'Greater American' patriotism of the professional thinkers, the former the latent hostility of an important part of public opinion towards men of ideas.

The word 'egghead' is obscure in origin, but it achieved a striking success. Within a few days it had circulated throughout the whole of the United States: every daily or weekly paper, every review, published articles for or against the eggheads. The argument was of course inseparable from the electoral campaign: Adlai Stevenson's entourage was said to be composed of typical representatives of the genre, and the Republicans sought to compromise the Democratic candidate by identifying him with them. Since the polemic was conducted by journalists or writers who were no less intellectual, in the sociological sense, than those whom they denounced, it remains to be established precisely what are the special characteristics which turn a writer or a scholar into a contemptible 'egghead'.

* Among scholars and writers, professors play a more important role in the discussion of ideas than novelists—the reverse of what happens in France.

One might perhaps conveniently borrow a definition from the late Louis Bromfield, one of the most intellectual of anti-intellectuals. "A person of spurious intellectual pretensions, often a professor or the protege of a professor. Fundamentally superficial. Over-emotional and feminine in reactions to any problem. Supercilious and surfeited with conceit and contempt for the experience of more sound and able men. Essentially confused in thought and immersed in a mixture of sentimentality and violent evangelism. A doctrinaire supporter of Middle-European socialism as opposed to Greco-French-American ideas of democracy and liberalism. Subject to the old-fashioned philosophical morality of Nietzsche which frequently leads him into jail or disgrace. A self-conscious prig, so given to examining all sides of a question that he becomes thoroughly addled while remaining always in the same spot. An anaemic bleeding heart."

This definition summarises the classic accusations raised against the intellectuals. They claim to be more competent than ordinary mortals but in fact they are less so. They are lacking in virility and resolution. By dint of looking at every aspect of a problem they are no longer capable of grasping the essentials and they have become incapable of decision. (Hints at homosexuality represent the extreme form of the argument.) Finally, Central European socialism with its doctrinaire character epitomises the ideology of the 'egghead' who indulges in a watered-down Marxism, and clears the way for Communism.

This sort of polemic is by no means limited to the United States. 'Visionaries', 'dreamers', 'word-spinners', 'ignorant and impractical idealists'—these are the classic insults which the bourgeois *paterfamilias* flings at his son when the latter wants to start a career in letters or the arts, these are the phrases which immediately spring to the mind of the politician or the business man whenever a writer or a scholar dares to criticise his behaviour.

The American polemic has none-the-less certain unique characteristics. Men of action, in present-day France, are so anxious to show their respect for intellectual values that they would not dare openly to formulate such judgments. Insinuations of non-virility or homosexuality, though not unknown on this side of the Atlantic, make little impression here: they are considered vulgar and boorish. Even more characteristic of the American climate is the way abuse of the intellectuals as a class is combined with criticisms aimed at those whom we call left-wing intellectuals' and whom Louis Bromfield calls 'liberals'.

The latter are considered to be traitors to the one and only true American tradition, the liberalism "of Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists, of men like Jefferson, Franklin and Monroe, Lincoln and Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson". The false liberals all stem from a psychopath called Karl Marx; they are interested not in ideals but in material security, they buy votes by means of subsidies and allowances, "in the very same way that precipitated the ruin of Rome, of Constantinople and Great Britain". They are planners; they believe in their own wisdom, not in that of the man in the street; they are not Communists but they are muddled thinkers and they allowed themselves to be duped by the Stalinists at Yalta and at Potsdam.

McCarthyism also, of course, attacks the left-wing intellectual as being 'un-American', the shameful disciple of Karl Marx, guilty of introducing Middle European socialism into the country of Jefferson and Lincoln. It also brackets together planning and homosexuality and suggests that the doctrinaire of the Welfare State partakes of the odium of international Communism, either because he subscribes to its false theories, or because he facilitates its activities, or because, consciously or unconsciously, he is working towards the same end.

This anti-liberal conformism (in the American sense of the word liberal) is a belated reaction against the left-wing conformism of the 'thirties, when the majority of the intellectuals believed that there was in fact a continuity or a solidarity between the opponents of the trusts, the advocates of social legislation and the Bolsheviks. They 'defended and illustrated' this unity of the Left or of the progressive movement during the Second World War well beyond the necessities of the alliance with the Soviet Union; and as long as possible they refused to believe in the guilt of Alger Hiss. The men who were susceptible to the attractions of Communism twenty years ago were recruited among the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia far more than among the workers or the oppressed minorities.*

Furthermore, the European intellectual who travels in the United States, far from discovering an all-powerful McCarthyist reign of terror, meets almost everywhere he goes an anti-McCarthy conformism. 'Everyone' is against the famous Senator (the only notable exception being James Burnham, who refused to condemn McCarthy out of hand and was for this reason removed from the editorial board of *Partisan Review*). Unfortunately, 'everyone' nevertheless feels himself to be in the minority, with a vague feeling of guilt for past flirtations with Communism, and a fear of popular

opinion which threatens to embrace in the same hostility reds, pinks and pale pinks—Communists, Socialists and New Dealers.

In an American university anyone who was not anti-McCarthy would be severely condemned by his colleagues— though his career would certainly be safe. And yet these same university professors sometimes hesitate to express themselves publicly on certain subjects, for example on Chinese Communism. The anti-McCarthy conformism is oddly combined with anti-Communist conformism. In denouncing the Senator's methods, people are careful to add that they detest Communism as much as he does. Almost united against McCarthyism, the intellectual community yet has an uncomfortable feeling of vulnerability. A fraction of the American people, mistrustful of experts, foreigners and ideas, and represented by the Hearst and MacCormick press, regards itself as having been betrayed by the leaders of yesterday and threatens to turn its anger against the professors, writers and artists, responsible alike for the abandonment of Eastern Europe to the Russian armies, the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek and the socialisation of medicine.

* The comparative failure of Communist propaganda among American negroes is an interesting phenomenon. The negro wants to be one hundred per cent American. He looks to the American ideal to redress the American reality: he does not choose the path of revolution.

Although disturbed by the wave of anti-intellectualism, these intellectuals are none-the-less perfectly reconciled with the United States. The old world has lost its prestige and glamour: the crudeness and the vulgarity of certain aspects of American life are as nothing compared to the concentration camps of Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. American economic prosperity is the best guarantee of attaining the objectives which the European Left has always advocated. The experts of the entire world come to Detroit to find the secret of wealth. In the name of what European values could the intellectual turn his back on the American reality? The charm and culture destroyed by the machine and sullied by factory smoke? Nostalgia for the pre-industrial order does indeed prompt certain scholars and writers to prefer the French to the American way of life. But what is the price, for the majority, of these privileged splendours? Are not the Europeans themselves ready to sacrifice them to greater productivity, to absorb any amount of Americanism in order to raise the standard of living of the masses? Seen from the United States, socialist planning—rapid industrialisation under the whip of the Communist

Party, the sole master of the State—seems to add to rather than subtract from the evils of technological civilisation.

There are some American intellectuals who remain faithful to the tradition of anti-conformism and who attack simultaneously the digests, the trusts, McCarthyism and capitalism. But this anti-conformism is not without a certain conformism itself, since it resurrects the themes of the militant liberalism of yesterday. The American intellectuals of today are in search of enemies. Some of them fight Communism, others McCarthyism, and others again both Communism and McCarthyism—not to mention those who in desperation are reduced to denouncing anti-anti-Communism. They are all crusaders in pursuit of infidels to put to the sword.

Of all Western countries, Great Britain is probably the one which has treated its intellectuals in the most sensible way. As D. W. Brogan once said à propos of Alain, "We British don't take our intellectuals so seriously". In this way the British manage to avoid both the militant anti-intellectualism which American pragmatism sometimes tends to lead to, and the uncritical admiration which, in France, is shown alike for the novels and the political opinions of writers, giving them an excessive sense of their own importance and inclining them to indulge in extreme judgments and vitriolic articles.

It is true that, up to the Second World War, recruitment for the public schools and universities in Britain was such that the ruling class had no difficulty in assimilating newcomers. The dissidents attacked and ridiculed social conformism without seriously shaking it. The conflicts of interests between the privileged did not call in question either the constitution or the political system. The intellectuals elaborated doctrines which inspired reforms, without giving the masses a taste for revolutionary violence. The reforms of the past two decades have considerably increased the number of university students and widened the social field from which they are drawn. The left-wing intellectual, who automatically takes the side of the future as against the past, who experiences a kind of solidarity with all the revolutionaries of the world, rules over a part of the weekly press, but he has not yet broken with his country. He shows himself to be no less attached to British parliamentary institutions than the conservatives he detests. He reserves for foreigners the benefits of the Popular Front, from which he himself is protected by the weakness of the British Communist Party. He would readily admit that the strength of Communism in each country is in inverse ratio to the merits of the régime.

Thus he would pay tribute to the excellence of the British parliamentary system, would recognise the legitimacy of Communism in France, Italy or China, and would declare himself to be a good patriot as well as a good internationalist. The Frenchman dreams of international reconciliation by the conversion of all non-Frenchmen to France. The Englishman is tempted to believe that no-one outside his happy island is altogether worthy to play cricket or the parliamentary game. It is an odd mixture of arrogance and modesty, which perhaps will have its reward: the peoples of India, of Africa and elsewhere, educated and emancipated by the British, will continue to play cricket and the parliamentary game.

CHAPTER VIII

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THEIR IDEOLOGIES

POLITICAL ideologies always combine, more or less felicitously, factual propositions and value judgments. They express an outlook on the world and a will orientated towards the future. They cannot be described as literally true or false, nor do they belong to the same category as taste and colour. The ultimate philosophy and the hierarchy of preferences invite discussion rather than proof or refutation; analyses of present facts, or prognostications about facts to come, alter with the unfolding of history and the knowledge we acquire of it. Experience progressively modifies doctrinal constructions.

In the West the climate of opinion immediately after the Second World War was conservative. If the Soviet Union had not loomed so threateningly, if China, after having thrown out the Europeans, had not aroused terrifying spectres of yellow imperialism, if the atomic bomb had not created world-wide anxiety, the Western countries would be celebrating the joys of peace restored, the Americans in the pride of a fabulous prosperity, the Europeans satisfied with a comfortable wisdom after so many follies. But the rivalry continues between the two worlds. Revolution has aroused the hitherto dormant masses outside the Western minority. Marx has replaced Confucius and the companions of Gandhi now dream of vast industrial undertakings.

In the autumn of 1954, for the first time since 1939, or rather since 1931, the cannons were silent—but not the sub-machine-guns: it would be premature to close the gates of the Temple of Janus.

The Basic Factors

In the West, the quarrel between capitalism and socialism is losing its emotional potential. Once the Soviet Union is identified with socialism, it is clear that the latter's function cannot be to succeed to the heritage of capitalism, but itself to ensure the development of productive forces. There is nothing to suggest that socialism must everywhere take over from the system of private ownership. Events have ruled out the idea of a parallelism between the phases of growth and the succession of régimes.

The so-called socialist societies rediscover, under modified forms, the necessities inherent in any modern economic system. There, just as under capitalism, the 'boss class' lays down the law. Soviet managers retain for themselves the equivalent of capitalist profits. Incentives, wages and production bonuses resemble the practices of the Western capitalism of yesterday. Up to now the planners, by reason of penury and of the decision to develop economic power as rapidly as possible, have not concerned themselves either with the productivity of the various investments or with the consumers' preferences. It will not be long before they experience the perils of slump and deflation and the exigencies of economic arithmetic.

Another basic factor of our century is the challenging of representative institutions. Up to 1914, what the Left stood for above everything else, and what non-Westerners sought to imitate, were the freedoms—freedom of the press, universal suffrage and deliberative assemblies. Parliament seemed to be Europe's masterpiece, which the 'cadets' of Russia or the Young Turks dreamed of reproducing in their own countries.

Between the two wars, parliamentary régimes failed in most European countries. The Soviet Union proved that the plurality of parties and government by discussion were not among the secrets of power which the backward societies needed to borrow from the conquering West. The crisis which, in South America, in the Near East and in Eastern Europe, paralysed the functioning of young democracies, raised doubts as to the practicability of exporting British and American customs. The representative system, of which Westminster and the Capitol offer the most finished models, allows professional groups, trade unions, religious sects and individuals the right to defend their own interests and to wrangle to their heart's content. It requires men capable of ensuring that controversies are conducted with due moderation, a ruling class conscious of its unity and prepared, if need be, to make sacrifices. It is threatened by irresponsibility and overheated debates (revolver shots were not unknown in certain Balkan parliaments), by the blind conservatism of the privileged, or by the weakness of the middle class.

The choice between political liberties and economic progress, between a free parliament and power stations, between the liberal Left and the socialist Left, is a false alternative in the West. In certain circumstances, however, it can appear an ineluctable one. The promotion of a non-capitalist country to the first rank of the great powers has proved by its success the possibility of 'westernisation without liberty' or 'westernisation against the West'.

The pre-established link between the denunciation of capitalism in the nineteenth century by a Western intellectual and the passions of the Asian and African intellectuals of today constitutes a third basic factor of our time. The Marxist doctrine, as much by its errors as by its partial truth, fits in with the view of the world which the Asian university graduate tends to form for himself. The big commercial or industrial firms established in Malaya or Hongkong or India appear to have more in common with the capitalism observed by Marx than with the modern industry of Detroit, Coventry or Billancourt. That the be-all and end-all of the West is the search for profits; that the religious missions and Christian beliefs are the smoke-screen or the alibi for cynical interests; that finally, the victim of its own materialism, the West must destroy itself by imperialist wars—such an interpretation is partial, misleading and unjust. It nevertheless convinces peoples in revolt against foreign masters.

By adhering to this ideology, the Asian intellectual changes the meaning of what he is resolved to accomplish. The Japanese reformers of the Meiji era drew up a constitution because this, like the railway, the telegraph, primary education and science, belonged to the social and intellectual system to which Europe seemed to owe its pre-eminence. By imitating the Russian form of the modern industrial society, the nation which was yesterday humiliated by France or Great Britain and today is in revolt against them, labours under the delusion that it owes nothing to the Westerners and that it is even overtaking them on the highway of history.

Inevitably—and this is the fourth fasic factor in the present world situation —the great schism between East and West is interpreted differently in London and Bombay, in Washington and Tokyo. The Soviet régime, which suppresses free discussion between parties, between parliamentarians, between intellectuals, and sometimes between scientists, appears strange and terrifying to Europeans or Americans. To Asian eyes, since it is characterised by the concentration of millions of men in industrial towns, by gigantic factories, by the cult of abundance and modern comfort and by the promise of a radiant future, it appears to be charged, more or less, with the same virtues and the same vices as the Western system. The Americans like to imagine that Russia threatens the free peoples and that the United States protects them. The Asians like to believe that the quarrel between America and the Soviet Union is no concern of theirs, and that morality as well as expediency ordains their neutrality. The Europeans on the whole would prefer the Asian interpretation, but the presence of the Russian armies two hundred

kilometres from the Rhine brings them back to reality. The Japanese, the Chinese or the Indians cannot but detest Western imperialism, which has been driven out of Asia but not yet out of Africa, just as much as the prospective imperialism of Russian or Chinese communists. The Europeans cannot but know that the Soviet Union is still poor, that the United States is already rich, that the domination of the former imposes a fairly primitive technique of industrialisation, and that the domination of the latter expresses itself primarily by the distribution of dollars.

Ideological debates differ from country to country, according to which particular aspect of the situation is emphasised or disregarded, according to the angle of vision or the tradition of thought. Sometimes the debates truly reflect the problems which a nation must seek to resolve, sometimes they distort or transform them in order to fit them into would-be universal patterns.

The National Debates

In Great Britain the debate is essentially technical rather than ideological because there is a general awareness of the ultimate compatibility of conflicting values. Unless one is a professional economist one can argue without bloodshed about a free health service, the volume of taxation or the nationalisation of steel. Yet the British can offer the same variety of opinions and the same gallery of intellectuals as the rest of Europe. The main difference concerns the precise issues at stake: elsewhere, people argue about the various choices with which they themselves are faced; the British argue about the choices facing others. The editors of the *New Statesman and Nation* are carried away with enthusiasm at the idea of collaboration between socialists and communists —in France, of course, not in Britain.

If the rest of the world were as sensible as Great Britain, the great debate would collapse from sheer boredom. Luckily, American senators, French intellectuals and Soviet commissars will provide inexhaustible opportunities for dispute.

The American debate, though basically similar, is very different in style from the British. The United States knows nothing of ideological conflicts in the French sense of the word. American intellectuals are not tied to opposing doctrines or classes and are unacquainted with antitheses such as those of the old France and modern France, Catholicism and free thought, capitalism and

socialism. Although they see no alternative to the present régime, the British intellectuals have no difficulty in imagining how the ideological battle might start up. Violent hostility to the ruling class, social envy and contempt for the hierarchy have been avoided or stifled, in spite of two world wars. But there is no guarantee that British society will indefinitely escape the upheavals which Continental societies have experienced.

On the other side of the Atlantic there is no sign of either the traditions or the classes which give European ideas their meaning. Aristocracy, and the aristocratic way of life, were ruthlessly eliminated by the War of Independence. The optimistic philosophy of the Enlightenment, equality of opportunity for all, the mastery of Nature—these have remained inseparable from the Americans' idea of their history and their destiny. The moralising tendency of American religion, and the multiplicity of sects and denominations, have prevented the clash between clerics and intellectuals which played such an important role in modern Europe. American nationalism was never inflamed by struggles against a hereditary enemy or revolt against foreign domination.

The American doctrine of equality was not a combative one, since it did not clash either with an aristocracy or a church. Conservatism in the English style found no human relationships or institutions to be preserved against the masses, the spirit of free enquiry, or technology. Tradition, conservatism and liberalism merged with one another since there was a duty to maintain the tradition of Liberty. The real American problem was to reconcile ideas with reality without betraying the former or sacrificing the latter. Actions were based on the example of the English conservatives, but the language used was often that of the French philosophers.

Having begun their historical existence with the doctrines of the British non-conformists and of the French Enlightenment, the United States never experienced a great socialist movement. The speed of economic expansion, the freedom of opportunity, the perpetual renewal, thanks to immigration and the negro population, of a sub-proletariat, the dispersion of the masses owing to the multiplicity of nationalities—all this prevented the formation of a party comparable to the German Social Democrats or the British Labour movement. The relationship between conflicts of interests and conflicts of ideas was different from the European model.

In America, society and not the State is responsible for integrating newcomers into the community. By opposing the régime, one would deprive

oneself of the citizenship to which one aspired. The socialists have always been suspect, because their theories seemed to be borrowed from outside, especially from Europe, whose despotism and violence America condemned. Nationalism manifested itself as a proud conviction of the unique value of the 'American way of life', rather than in the adoption by the entire community of the will to power.

The formation of the American parties according to regional as much as social considerations made it impossible to christen one Left and the other Right. The party which brought about the emancipation of the slaves was to the Left, but was the defender of the states against the Federal power to the Right? Lincoln's party was no less left-wing for being allied to the bankers and industrialists of the East.

The antithesis between Left and Right may have acquired some significance during recent years by reason of the great depression and the New Deal. In the towns—outside the South—the Democrats have become the party of the national minorities, of the majority of the industrial workers, and of the negroes. High society, the banking and the commercial classes remain pro-Republican. Hostility to the trusts and to Wall Street, the introduction of social legislation, economic controls, and support for the trade unions were combined in the programmes and the practices of the Democrats during the 'thirties. Most of the transformations which occurred under Roosevelt's presidency are irreversible, the essential fact in the case being the extraordinary prosperity between 1941 and 1954, for which governmental measures are only partly responsible. This 'liberalism' resembled that of the European Left more than at any other time, since it comprised elements of socialism, diluted and Americanised— socialism on the British Labour model rather than doctrinaire socialism. By the same token, it was extremely vulnerable. The reforms of the New Deal were in the direction of 'statism', and consequently were denials of the American tradition.

Economic conflicts in the United States today arc technical rather than ideological. The Republicans, hostile on principle to public expenditure and the expansion of the Federal State, have nevertheless substantially reduced only the national defence budget. They have not touched the social laws, in fact they have improved some of them, and they have reluctantly launched a modest programme of public works. They could scarcely be said to like the régime which they have taken over; in the same way British Conservatives deplore the National Health Service and the immoderate scale of death duties. But neither the Republicans nor the Conservatives are capable of

reversing the evolutionary process. In Great Britain, business men and intellectuals do not challenge *faits accomplis.* In the United States, people often talk as if socialised medicine were the first step to socialism— itself hardly distinguishable from communism—and as if the essence of Americanism were threatened by the manipulation of the bank rate or the expansion of the civil service.

However, neither conflicts between ideologies which originated in Europe, nor controversies about the forms of a regime which is almost unanimously accepted, are truly American. On the other hand, the effort to establish the unique characteristics of the American economy in relation to those of Europe and to define the scope of American civilisation in face of the Soviet challenge, has begun to dominate the traditional domestic quarrels.

In what way does American capitalism differ from British, French or German capitalism? How does free competition really function? To what extent are economic concentrations favourable or contrary to technical progress? Certain liberals, such as David Lilienthal, have taken the side of the big corporations. Economists such as J. K. Galbraith have elaborated a theory of economic competition which is a sort of transposition of the political theory of the balance of power. In the teeth of all the invective against socialist 'encroachment', and apart from the Republicans who dream of a society of free, equal and responsible individuals or the doctrinaires who clamour for a price mechanism which is not falsified by State interference, a proportion of the American intelligentsia is trying to grasp the true significance of an unprecedented historical experience.

The world rivalry with the Soviet Union makes this stocktaking essential. The enemy invokes an ideology. What, the question is, are the ideas which the United States is based on? Propaganda has been unable to provide an answer. The American achievement does not lend itself to a systematic formalisation. Proletariat, permanent revolution, classless society—the 'Voice of America' tries its best to snatch away from Communism some of these sacred slogans, but without convincing its listeners. The Communist revolution is transferable, because it is the work of a single party prepared to use violence; the American revolution is not, because it presupposes the action of innumerable private groups and business undertakings and the individual initiative of free citizens.

Controversies about foreign policy provide another aspect of this stock-taking. On the lower levels, arguments and abuse are exchanged on the same

subjects as in Europe: how much of the national budget should be devoted to military preparations and economic aid, whether or not to recognise the Government of Mao Tse-tung, and so on. Although these questions have no real connection with the interpretation of Stalinism or the intensity of anti-Communism, emotional considerations operate to give them the appearance of such connection; the same men tend to explain away totalitarianism by accelerated industrialisation, to recommend the extension of the Point IV programme to the entire planet, to plead for the recognition of Mao Tse-tung, to denounce McCarthy and McCarthyism; and they become suspect in the eyes of the other school, which wants to economise the taxpayer's money, which oscillates between isolationism and hatred of Chinese Communism, and which is never satisfied with the-nation's security measures.

Perhaps these passionate debates, of which that which followed the recall of General MacArthur was the most celebrated, represent stages in America's political education. For the first time, the United States is faced with the same situation as the European countries have known for centuries: it is forced to coexist with an enemy whose threatening presence is a daily experience. Against the moralists who were ready for a crusade, against the militarists proclaiming that there is no substitute for victory, a Republican President and Secretary of State accepted a compromise in Korea, the moral significance and the diplomatic consequences of which were both equally important.

The renunciation of victory represented a complete break with the strategy of two world wars: it signified a sort of conversion to realism. One negotiated with the aggressor instead of punishing him. Voluntarily isolated from the maelstrom of world politics during the last century, the United States was able to devote itself to the development of its vast territory without worrying about its place among the nations of the world. The great Republic has become aware simultaneously of its power and of the limits of its power. Condemned to a world role, it is discovering its own uniqueness. A philosophy of international politics, pluralist and empirical, might be the outcome of this examination of conscience.

The great quarrel of the French intellectuals is also about Communism, but it is conducted in a very different style. Although there is a powerful Communist party in France, the Stalinist intellectuals are not involved in real debates with their non-Communist colleagues. Communist or fellow-travelling physicists, chemists or doctors do not have their own laboratories or their own methods; apart from what they read in the Party press they know

nothing of dialectical materialism.* With few exceptions, specialists in the humanities are scarcely more concerned about it. As for the Sorbonne professors who, without being Party members, sign petitions against the rearming of Germany or bacteriological warfare: they write books about Virtue, Nothingness or Existentialism which would not be perceptibly different if Stalin had never existed. Whatever one may say, Communism in France is a political problem, not a spiritual one.

France has been suffering for some time past from a slowing down of economic growth. The evil, so often exposed by economists both of the Right and of the Left, manifests itself by alternations of inflation and stagnation, the survival of anachronistic enterprises, the dispersion of the apparatus of production, the low productivity of an important part of agriculture. This crisis, magnified by the errors of the period 1930-1938 and the Second World War, originated with the lowering of the birth-rate and the agricultural protectionism introduced at the end of the last century. For the past six years there have been signs that it is being overcome.

* This does not mean (*a*) that the Communist intellectuals do not try to form cells, or (*b*) that they are objective about topics which affect the object of their faith: the books written by Communist geographers about the Soviet Union are discreetly orientated, but orientated by their preferences not by dialectical materialism.

The French economic system was a casual creation. It could be attributed to the bourgeois élite, if one supposes the bourgeoisie to be the ruling class. The politicians and the ordinary electors were no less responsible than the directors of the trusts for the measures which have gradually put a brake on economic expansion. Collectively, the French have preferred their leisures to the raising of their living standards, State subsidies and allowances to the rigours of competition.

Before 1914, the out-and-out capitalist was the owner of land or real estate. Since then he has been more hard hit than any other social category. Incomes from capital—stocks and shares or property—today represent in France a lower percentage of the national income than in any other Western country (less than five per cent). The real villains are the sugar beet growers and suchlike who exert quite blatant pressure on the Government in defence of their interests.

The debate on the attitude to be adopted towards the Communists inside France is distinct without being completely separated from the debate on the diplomacy to be adopted towards the Soviet camp. The 'experts', enamoured of expansion, throw doubts on the ability of a centre-Right majority to promote economic progress. For different reasons, the literary intelligentsia take up the arguments of the experts: in their eyes, only a left-wing majority can offer guarantees against the rule of money and in favour of a policy of peace. Every country in Europe has its Bevanites, neutralists, adversaries of the Atlantic Pact or NATO. The French have developed a wider and subtler variety of such conceptions, because they have more taste for the discussion of ideas (especially when they have no practical significance) than the British or the Americans.

Nevertheless, this sort of discussion is probably less sterile than it appears. The Communists have admitted once and for all that the two camps are involved in a long-term war from which the socialist camp alone will survive. The non-Communists cannot accept this vision of the world even with the values reversed. Eschewing dogmatism, they do not accept either that the West is adequately defined by private ownership, the profit motive or representative institutions, or that the Soviet world is incapable of producing an interpretation of its own faith which might allow a progressive pacification. The Communist wants Soviet strategy to conform to the image of it which the doctrine provides for the masses. The anti-Communist wants it to conform to the esoteric doctrine —war to the knife and so forth. History is rarely as logical as this. The reality exists or will exist somewhere between the vulgar and the esoteric meaning: the strategy of world conquest is liable to remain the ulterior motive of the leadership without dictating their actual conduct.

The intellectuals are wont to conduct these two debates, the economic and the diplomatic, in ideological terms. The best way to accelerate economic progress, the parliamentary combination most likely to favour expansion without allowing a repetition of the 'Prague coup'—these are problems for the French alone, not humanity as a whole. Speculations on a foreign policy which would be neither that of satellite of the Soviet Union nor of partner in the Atlantic Pact must have their consequences if they hamstring French diplomacy, but they have no universal significance. Accustomed to speaking for the whole of mankind, ambitious for a role on a planetary scale, the French intellectuals do their utmost to camouflage the provincialism of their controversies under the debris of the nineteenth-century philosophies of

history. The Communists, in accepting the Marxist prophecies for the benefit of the Party, and the non-Communist revolutionaries, in taking up these same prophecies in a formalised and hypothetical sense, both succeed in escaping from the narrow confines of a second-class nation. Instead of discussing the sensible question of what to do when the workers vote in large numbers for the Communist Party in a country which is, geographically and spiritually, within the Western orbit, they animadvert on the revolutionary vocation of a proletariat which was the figment of Marx's imagination—they postulate the mythical equivalence of the proletariat and the Communist Party.

In a sense, this French debate has an exemplary significance. France did not create either the political or the economic institutions which are characteristic of the modern world. But she elaborated and disseminated the typical ideologies of the European Left: human equality, the freedom of the citizen, science and free enquiry, revolution and progress, self-determination and historical optimism. The two 'giants' both claim to be the legitimate heirs of these ideologies. Europe's intellectuals do not feel at home in either camp. Should they lean towards the Soviet Union by taking up the themes of Marxist prophecy, or towards the United States which, in spite of everything, respects the liberties of the mind? Or should they reject the present outcome of technological civilisation in both forms? The intellectuals of France are not alone in formulating such questions: in every country which has been humiliated by national decline and which retains a nostalgia for aristocratic values, there are other intellectuals to echo them.

The art of the British intellectuals is to reduce to technical terms conflicts which are often ideological; the art of the American intellectuals is to transpose into moral conflicts controversies which are far more concerned with means than with ends; the art of the French intellectuals is to ignore and very often to aggravate the real problems of the nation out of an arrogant desire to think for the whole of humanity.

The Japanese Intellectuals and the French Example

Intellectuals suffer from their inability to alter the course of events. But they underestimate their influence. In a long-term sense, politicians are the disciples of scholars or writers. The doctrinaire of liberalism is wrong to equate the progress of socialism with the diffusion of false ideas. It is nonetheless true that theories taught in universities become, within a few years, truths accepted by ministers or administrators. Government financiers

are Keynesian in 1955, though they rejected his ideas in 1935. The ideologies of the literary intelligentsia in a country like France also influence their rulers' ways of thinking.

In non-Western countries the role of the intellectual, in the widest sense of the term, is even greater. In Russia and in China, not in Britain or in Germany, parties which were originally small in numbers and which were recruited mainly among university graduates have come to control the destiny of entire peoples, and, once masters of the State, have imposed an official orthodoxy. In Asia and in Africa, university graduates are today taking over the leadership of revolutionary movements or the government of States which have recently been promoted to independence.

The role of the intellectuals of Asia and their leanings towards Marxism have often been explained. Here we need only recall the essentials. The progressive ideas which permeate the universities of the West tend to 'alienate' the young intellectual from a traditionalist society and to inflame him against European domination. This domination makes nonsense of democratic principles, and the hierarchical and unegalitarian society, justified by beliefs unacceptable to the spirit of free enquiry, appears shocking to the mind inspired with the optimism of rationalist philosophy. The example of the Russian Revolution and the writers of the West have made socialist ideas popular. Therefore the Leninist Marxism which has been adopted by the Communists puts the accent on the exploitation of the world by the West Europeans. Little matter if the analyses of Lenin owe as much to anti-imperialist bourgeois sociologists such as Hobson as to Marx himself.

Beyond these generalities, what are the circumstances which in each case determine the content and style of the debate? Let us, first of all, take the example of Japan, where the intellectuals (especially in the narrow sense of writers and artists) seem to conform to the French model. In the majority they tend towards the Left, more or less approaching Communism but without actually crossing the threshold. As in France also, the Government is in close alliance with the United States—an alliance which the majority of the intelligentsia resignedly disapproves.

Analogies immediately suggest themselves. In Japan, as in France, the intellectuals feel humiliated by the fact that their country is supported and protected by the United States. Yesterday Japan was the enemy and France the ally of the protector, but this different past does not affect the similarity of their present condition. Neither country can visualise any immediate

prospect of temporal grandeur. Whereas China, unified under a strong government, has launched out on an industrial career, Japan is condemned to a subordinate position, either within the maritime system of the United States or within the Sino-Russian continental system. Even if the latter disintegrated, Japan would have no chance of renewing her conquests, but at most the possibility of greater room for manoeuvre in a balance-of-power diplomacy. In the same way, France, whether or not she integrates herself with Western Europe, is capable of maintaining an honourable position on the international stage, but by her geographical dimensions and her physical resources is excluded from the top rank.

Japan feels herself to be naturally linked with those from whom the American alliance separates her, and alien to those with whom circumstances have allied her. The phenomenon may manifest itself quite differently in France, but basically the resemblance is striking. France is naturally reluctant to unite herself with Germany, even a Germany reduced to half its size, and to gang up against Russia, even a Communist Russia. Japan is not readily embraced by any of the anti-Communist countries of Asia—whether by South Korea and the Philippines which have been entirely won over to the cause of the United States, or by Indonesia and Burma which are independent, neutralist and inclined to the Left. Even though she has been China's enemy, Japan is conscious of the absurdity of a bamboo curtain between the two great civilisations of north-east Asia. Resistance to the Soviet Union is the only aspect of present Japanese policy which might be supported and justified by national sentiment.

Economically, too, the situation of Japan is not without certain common characteristics with that of France. The differences are obvious: the population of Japan has passed the optimum of power as well as of comfort. A population of sixty million would be able to obtain a living from the soil and would not have to import more than the raw materials of industry. With a population of ninety millions, the country must choose between costly investments to increase its agricultural production and the import of a fifth of its rice requirements. France on the whole is well short of the optimum of power and of comfort in spite of the recent improvement in the birth-rate. In Japan, income per head of population and the standard of living are well below those of France.

Nevertheless, if one takes into account the big gap between European and Asian standards, the condition of Japan is comparable to that of France. In

neither country do the intellectuals receive salaries which accord with their aspirations. In both countries, modern factories are to be found cheek by jowl with old-fashioned workshops. The oppositionists denounce the bosses of the trusts (which are more real in Japan than in France), but they forget that the spindrift from dwarf enterprises is sometimes more harmful to productivity than the concentration of economic power in a few hands.

Japan is even more ignorant than France of real Protestant-style capitalism with free competition and the recruitment of the ablest according to the criterion of success. The State played a decisive part in the country's industrialisation and handed over the big corporations to a few great families. Management was regarded as a public service and was monopolised by the feudal barons. The Marxist denunciation of the capitalist barons of the modern era finds a ready hearing there. Although Japanese society is by no means stagnant, and although the Japanese economy is a dynamic one, circumstances have created there the same disproportion between what the intellectuals expect from the nation and what the nation can in fact offer them as one finds in present-day France.

The culture of Japan is essentially literary and artistic. The intellectuals employ the democratic jargon and sincerely believe themselves to be attached to ideas which are at once liberal and socialist. But one suspects that in their heart of hearts they put beauty and the art of living above everything else. Verbally, they resent American capitalism, emotionally they detest the unbuttoned ease of the American way of life, the vulgarity of mass culture. Their traditional values derive from a stiff, high-minded morality, comparable to that of mediaeval European chivalry: the sense of obligation, loyalty towards superiors, the subordination of the passions to moral duty. The most frequent themes in Japanese literature are conflicts between different duties or between duty and love. Daily life is stylised and restricted by severe rules which curb spontaneity and subject the individual to the social order. American manners attract the ordinary people but shock the susceptibilities of the more sensitive by their free-and-easiness and the apparent equality of human relations. The American preoccupation with practical efficiency is diametrically opposed to the traditional Japanese desire to give to each moment, to each flower, to each dish an irreplaceable beauty. The feeling that the 'American way of life'—with the *Readers' Digest,* mass entertainment, loud and vulgar publicity—is guilty of aggression against superior forms of culture is as widespread among the intellectuals of Japan as among those of France (although the former may express it less openly than

the latter). In both cases, the imitations of American institutions caricature the originals: the 'comics' of Tokyo are even more hideously vulgar than those of Detroit. At the same time, there is a reluctance to invoke the cultural argument, which might sound reactionary. It is easier to attribute all the evil to 'capitalism'.

There, perhaps, lies the basic factor in the attitudes common to the intellectuals of Japan and of France. Both subscribe to the 'progressive' system of thought, both denounce the 'feudalists', both dream of economic planning, living standards, rationalisation. In fact, they hate Americanism not because of McCarthy or the capitalists, but because they are humiliated by American power and feel their cultural values threatened by the masses whose advancement, in the name of their ideologies, they are bound to applaud.

On this basis also one can grasp the profound difference between the situation of the Japanese and the French intelligentsias. Practical science, industrial technology, rationalisation, banking and credit—all the institutions of modern economy are no less indigenous to France than to the United States. Probably the gap between the French and the American form of industrial society is greater than that between France and Germany or France and Great Britain. But neither automobile factories nor representative institutions, neither trade unions nor the organisation of labour represent a break with the national traditions. As for Japan, there is no need to subscribe to the metaphysic according to which every culture constitutes an entity destined for a unique future, in order to recognise that there was nothing a century ago to suggest the imminent arrival of parliamentary government, electric light or the principles of 1789.

The intellectuals of Tokyo, with their nostalgia for Mont-parnasse or St. Germain-des-Prés, may well develop the same politico-economic ideologies as the French intelligentsia. There, however, these ideologies are disseminated in a totally different environment; they belong to the Western civilisation which for the last century has been gnawing at the edifice of historical Japan.

Most cultures have developed not, after the fashion of a Leibnitzian monad, according to their own law, without either giving or receiving anything, but by continually borrowing and transforming ideas, customs and beliefs. The Japanese culture acquired a religion which originated in India and travelled via Iran and China; from China it obtained its system of writing

and the initial forms of its architecture, sculpture and painting. On all these borrowed forms it put the stamp of its own genius. The reformers of the Meiji era sought to glean from the West what they considered to be indispensable to military power, which itself was the condition of independence and which, they understood, demanded not only guns and discipline but a social system. So they introduced a Western-type legislation, universities, scientific research. Simultaneously, they sought to restore the cult of the Emperor and the spirit of age-old national customs. This combination was unstable, as any combination of Western industrialism and Asian beliefs must inevitably be. It nevertheless permitted the building-up of a great power which might have lasted a long time if it had not indulged in military adventure which led to defeat.

The American occupation has reinforced Western influence and weakened the old traditions. Japanese morality, scarcely distinguishable from the country's religion, was linked to imperial continuity, the exaltation of the Fatherland, and the role of the nobility of daimons and samurais in the country's renovation. The military men lost face, the old ruling class submitted to the laws of the conqueror, the Emperor went to greet General MacArthur and from then on behaved like a constitutional sovereign. Both the reforms imposed by the occupying power and the human example of the barbarians clashed with the customs of centuries.

At the moment, the Japanese intellectuals appear to be divided, within themselves, between the inherited and the borrowed culture. They do not adhere wholeheartedly to either. The parliamentary institutions which the Meiji reformers introduced without affecting the authoritarian principles of the constitution now function with difficulty, deprived of prestige and respect. The strength of the conservative parties lies in the countryside. The inhabitants of the towns, half uprooted, are more and more inclined to vote for the socialist parties. The style in which politics are conducted is Western, as are also the theatre, literature, music and sport. Immense crowds throng to baseball matches and jazz sessions. The Nô plays have become curiosities for the erudite. Buddhism and Shintoism are disregarded by the majority of the intellectuals.

Will the latter finally be won over to Communism? As far as the near future is concerned, I think the answer is in the negative. The Japanese intelligentsia will probably not go over to Communism of its own volition. If, however, circumstances—for example internal disintegration, increased economic difficulties or an eventual rapprochement with the Communist

mainland—favoured the victory of the Communist Party, the intelligentsia would have little spiritual resistance to offer. Communism, once it was in power, would have no profound religious feeling to eliminate and no clerical power to break. Taking advantage of the vacuum left by the breakdown of the old order, it could simply erect a new hierarchy upheld by new beliefs.

India and British Influence

French influence on Japanese thinking has been fairly negligible.* It exists at all only because the situation, the complexes and the contradictions of the two intelligentsias are to a certain extent similar. The Japanese read André Gide and Jean-Paul Sartre with the same passion. They feel justified in their progressive sentiments by the opinions of the latter, and are not in the least shaken by the former's *Return from the USSR.*

* Perhaps this statement is too extreme. Since the end of the last century, French literature has had some influence on that of Japan. Japanese writers imitated the artistic style of the French before imitating their political attitudes.

In the Asian countries which were ruled by the British and which achieved their independence after the Second World War the situation is quite different. Indian or Burmese intellectuals are also for the most part progressives, but they are not Communists: outwardly they are more inclined to anti-imperialism than to anti-Communism, but basically they are more uneasy about the intentions of Mao Tse-tung than those of President Eisenhower.

In this connection, there seem to me to be three determining factors: the national variations of Western influence, the attitude towards religion and the past, and the relative strength of liberal and/or socialist convictions.

There is nothing more fascinating for the traveller than the *nationality* of the institutions imported from Europe or America which he comes across in Tokyo, Hongkong, Saigon or Calcutta. Japan, which had not been subjected to Western domination before 1945, sent lawyers, writers, politicians and philosophers into different Western countries. Most Japanese teachers speak one foreign language, not always the same. The Western restaurants of Tokyo are French, German, English or American, and Japanese institutions or scientific schools bear the hallmark, variously, of France, Germany, Great

Britain or the United States. There is nothing like this in India, where the West is known only in the version offered by British culture. And intellectuals influenced by Great Britain react differently to politics from those who have been submitted to French or American influence.

French influence breeds revolutionaries. The cult of the Revolution, the tendency towards lofty abstraction, the taste for ideology, and indifference to the awkward realities which command the destiny of nations—all these are contagious virtues or vices. Intellectuals accustomed to this climate will often be at the same time French and nationalist. Our culture encourages the impatience born of the contrast between what is and what should be, between the infinite grandeur of ambition and the hoary conservatism of the present; it even disposes people to submit to the strictest discipline in the name of the ultimate freedom.

In quite different ways, American influence risks producing analogous results. It does not teach people that 'there are no enemies on the Left' or that capitalism is the root of all evil. But it spreads unlimited optimism, denigrates the past, and encourages the adoption of institutions which are in themselves destructive of the collective unity.

Today, the United States is considered to be the defender of reaction against Communism. The necessities, rightly or wrongly interpreted, of the cold war have sometimes thrown her on to the defensive in a way that is contrary to the celebrated American formula of "government of the people, by the people, for the people". Every traditional society, unegalitarian and hierarchical, is condemned by this dictum, which puts its trust in men but not in the State, which advocates the sharing of authority, the reinforcement of trade unions and local or provincial administrations. (In Japan, the occupation authorities went so far as to suppress the State police.)

American influence somehow fails to transmit the beliefs and attitudes which, at home, have made the weakness of the State, the strength of professional groups, and the absence of religious uniformity compatible with the nation's power, prosperity and coherence: the quasi-unanimous allegiance to the American homeland, the civic sense of the individual, respect for personal rights, non-dogmatic religion, combined with a pragmatism pushed to the cult of efficiency.- In the absence of this, the optimism of the Enlightenment, which proclaims human equality and the right to happiness, creates the same void in the individual breast as in society as a whole, and conduces to Communism against 'the American way of life'.

British education, which is less ideological than the French and less optimistic than the American, does not alienate the intellectual to the same extent. It creates habits instead of elaborating doctrines; it fosters the desire to imitate actual practices rather than reproduce an ideological language. The admirer of Great Britain would like the parliament of New Delhi to resemble that of Westminster. I do not believe that a single Indo-Chinese or Moroccan intellectual could possibly dream of an assembly similar to that of the Palais-Bourbon. The pupils of the British model themselves on the reality, the pupils of the French on the ideology, of the West. Reality is always more conservative than ideology.

In Ceylon, in Burma or in India, those who have taken over the newly independent States have a sense of legality; they prefer gradual methods, they are opposed to regimentation, they abhor violence. It is often said that Buddhism deters intellectuals from Communism: in this form, the affirmation seems to me to be somewhat questionable. Other circumstances besides spiritual affinity or repugnance are determining the course of the political history of Asia in the twentieth century. It is true that Communism is all the more attractive wherever the throne of God is empty. When the intellectual feels no longer attached either to the community or the religion of his forebears he looks to progressive ideologies to fill the spiritual vacuum. The main difference between the progressivism of the disciple of Harold Laski or Bertrand Russell and the Communism of the disciple of Lenin concerns not so much the *content* as the *style* of the ideologies and the allegiance they demand. It is the dogmatism of the doctrine and the unconditional submission of the militants which constitute the originality of Communism, which is inferior on the intellectual plane to the open, liberal versions of progressive ideology but perhaps superior for anyone who is in search of a faith. The intellectual who no longer feels attached to anything is not satisfied with opinions merely; he wants certainty, he wants a system. The Revolution provides him with his opium.

The leaders of Burma, who have remained faithful to Buddhism, have fought courageously against Communism although they subscribe to a socialist conception. In other Buddhist countries intellectuals have gone over to Communism in large numbers: the seduction of Communism depends not so much on the content of the old belief as on the degree of deracination. According to whether the Western influence to which he has been submitted encourages him to reject or to reform the national religion, the intellectual either becomes ripe for a new fanaticism or inclined to fit progressive ideas

into a religious framework inherited from tradition or imitated from the West.

Present-day India, which has proportionately more Communist voters than its neighbours, is also the country where the number of foreign missions, of professing Christians, of those who can read and write, is the largest. Pessimists always suggest that the condition of the peasant is such that he is inclined to revolt as soon as he awakes from his ancestral sleep. By rousing him the missionary, against his will, delivers him up helpless to the propagandists of the new Faith. Other observers believe that the affinity between an historical religion like Christianity and a religion of history like Communism explains the contagion. Anyone who breaks with Hinduism and subscribes to a belief in the divinity of Christ and the Day of Judgment will be more vulnerable to the prophetism of a Christian heresy than the man who belongs to an essentially aristocratic Church or subscribes to a universal dogma.

Perhaps the essential factor is the break between the individual and his environment of which an imported proselytising religion is the agent. The pupils of the Christian schools, sometimes even those who have received Baptism, once detached from Hinduism and imperfectly integrated in the Western universe, no longer have any fixed point of reference, any real certitude. They are progressive in matters of economics and politics without having any assured basis for their ideas. Communism fits their ill-digested and scattered opinions into a system which is satisfying to the mind and preserved from doubt; it imposes a discipline—a discipline which will repel the man who is convinced of the virtues of intellectual freedom but will give the uprooted the framework to which they unconsciously aspire.

The strength or the weakness of liberalism also explains the number or the quality of the converts to Communism. The essence of Western culture, the basis of its success, the secret of its wide influence, is liberty. Not universal suffrage, a belated and disputable political institution, not the parliamentary system, which is one democratic procedure among others, but the freedom of research and criticism, gradually won, the freedom whose historical conditions have been the duality of temporal and spiritual power, the limitation of State authority and the autonomy of the universities.

Far from being a development of bourgeois liberalism, Communism is a retrogression. It is difficult to convict it of imposture or anyway to persuade progressivist intellectuals that it is an imposture, because *any* institutional

expression of the democratic ideal is in some sense a betrayal of that ideal. There is no such thing as government of the people by the people: to prove that free elections and the plurality of parties are less imperfect expressions of popular sovereignty than the single party system, however obvious this may appear to most of us, would involve one in a lifetime of argument and dispute.

Doubts are dissipated as soon as the values which define the West—respect for the individual and freedom of enquiry —are properly grasped. Asian graduates from Western universities have all acquired a taste for this freedom. True, the Europeans have all too often violated their own principles outside Europe; they have rendered suspect their pleas on behalf of democracy and their indictment of the Soviet system. Nevertheless, in spite of everything, the prestige of these values is such that the Communists do not dare despise them; in fact they pretend to subscribe to them. It is in the name of a pseudo-rationalism that the Communists spread their new orthodoxy. The intellectual who has found internal equilibrium in an attitude that conforms to reason must inevitably reject the dogma.

In spite of his reluctance, however, he may end up by accepting it if experience proves the failure of liberal methods in politics or economics. No European country ever went through the phase of economic development which India and China are now experiencing, under a régime that was representative and democratic. Nowhere, during the long years when industrial populations were growing rapidly, factory chimneys looming up over the suburbs and railways and bridges being constructed, were personal liberties, universal suffrage and the parliamentary system combined. In those years there were autocratic régimes in which universal suffrage was combined with the absolute power of a single man; there were parliamentary régimes in which the suffrage was restricted and the assembly aristocratic; or there were constitutional monarchies. The Indian experiment is a unique one brought about by the contact of two civilisations: a democratic and parliamentary republic which attempts to combine universal suffrage, the rule of law and five-year plans.

The difficulties are obvious. A democratic régime in our day implies freedom of expression for the various interests, trade unions or parties, and forbids arbitrary rule. In Europe, the function of representative institutions was to limit or replace monarchies: they took over from an established power. In Asia, the new democracies are taking over from an absolute power, colonial or imperial, but the collapse of the latter created a void which the

republics of India or Indonesia had to fill. States have rarely been built up on a basis of strict adherence to the norms of liberal democracy.

The economic task which has devolved upon the new governments of Asia is equally heavy. Almost unanimously, the leaders of the independent nations subscribe to the imperative of expansion, which means industrialisation first and foremost—even before an increase in food production. They have borrowed from the European Left a predilection for socialist techniques. Sometimes these are suited to the circumstances: it would be wrong to rely on private enterprise in a country where there are no entrepreneurs, where the rich indulge in extravagant luxury. But it would be equally wrong to bank on a strictly planned system in the absence of proper statistics and competent officials, to count up the benefits due to dollar aid, if the Asian governments are incapable of opening the workshops which would absorb the proffered capital.

In Asia, as in France, the intellectuals have a tendency to stress the complete incompatibility of ideologies with universal claims—private ownership against public ownership, the mechanism of the market against the planned economy, instead of coolly analysing the different national environments in order to ascertain which particular method would be best suited to the particular circumstances. The adoption of American capitalist practices or British socialist ideas does not necessarily answer the requirements of economic development in the so-called under-developed countries, any more than the imitation of the actual British parliamentary system guarantees an effective democracy in India or Indonesia. However much they may borrow from outside, the newly independent peoples must mould their own future.

In this respect, a general theory would start with the idea of the different phases of economic growth. Marx sought to. link up the succession of these phases with the transformations of régimes. Unfortunately, he outlined a system inspired* by the facts so far as they were known in his own time and belied by subsequent history. The technique of socialism, in the sense which the Communists give to the term, is no more the necessary consequence of maturity than it is indispensable to accelerated industrialisation.

A theory which refrained from imposing a particular technique in any given phase would show what are the problems to be solved in each period. It would leave plenty of room for controversy, necessary because the aspirations of the intellectual, in the twentieth century, are so difficult to reconcile with

the condition of those countries which have recently been promoted to independence and have not yet emerged from feudal poverty.

The intellectuals would remain progressive and would continue to see no other choice but that between democratic methods and violence. But they would not confuse democratic socialism as practised in Great Britain, where the annual income per head of population is many times higher than in most other countries, with the application of the same philosophy in the Indian sub-continent. A free health service would not even be conceivable in India. A scheme for unemployment insurance would sacrifice the strong to the weak and the future to the present. Impoverished societies cannot subordinate the need for production to that of egalitarian distribution. Not that all inequalities are favourable to productivity. On the contrary, the excessive luxury of the rich is an economic as well as a moral scandal. But laws guaranteeing security to a minority of workers employed in factories, chosen at random among millions of unemployed, would be premature and unrealistic.

Whether it is a question of values, of means or of the distant future, science does not forbid the play of ideas, but simply brings it down to reality. It preserves the intellectuals from nostalgia for the past and vain revolt against the present, and encourages them to *think* the world before aspiring to change it.

No Asian country was so legitimately proud of its history and its culture as was China. None, for a century past, had been so deeply humiliated. Not that she was ever conquered: one does not conquer China—at most one can seize the throne as the Manchus did. The opium wars, the sacking of the Summer Palace, the foreign concessions, the one-sided treaties, the 'big-stick' policy—all this has left a heritage of resentment which will be slow to disappear. The Communists, as soon as they came to power, destroyed the Christian communities in China; any strong government might well have acted in the same way, though perhaps with different methods.

The traditional doctrine on which the age-old order of China was based was primarily moral and social. Confucianism justified the accession of men of letters to the exercise of administrative and governmental functions. The collapse of the empire brought about the ruin of the ideology. In India, the regeneration of Hinduism took place under the noses of the barbarians, under the protection of the Indian Civil Service. A renewal of Confucianism might

have followed but could not have paved the way for China's return to the ranks of the great powers.

The intellectuals who spontaneously went over to Communism before 1949 were only a small minority. The prestige of the Russian Revolution, which ever since 1920 had brought about the conversion of a few men of letters, was not basically distinguishable from that of other revolutionary ideas imported from Europe. The long years of war, the gradual corruption of the Kuomintang, the inflation, the severity of the police terror, alienated the intelligentsia and made them the natural allies of Mao Tse-tung.

Can Communism, secular and materialist, become the doctrine of the Chinese intellectuals? The depreciation of the family and the boosting of the Party and the State represent a break with tradition, which only yesterday would have been considered totally impossible. But the Communist Party has nevertheless reconstituted a hierarchy at the summit of which scholars sit enthroned. Marxist-Leninists they call themselves today, and they are warriors as well as scholars— a combination which had been unknown for centuries. Perhaps Western influence was needed to restore it: united against a hated foreign domination, the intellectuals of China rediscovered the old crusading fervour and, in winning their battle, allowed the West an ironic victory too: for the doctrine in whose name they threw out the barbarians belongs to the very essence of the West since it puts 'action' and 'history' in the forefront.

The West has taught the people of Asia to re-think their past. Already in the nineteenth century, the basic theme of Russian philosophy was the contrast between the destiny of Russia and that of Europe. Marxism, in the Leninist version, offers to the intellectuals of all continents the means of reinterpreting their own history and that of their foreign masters without humiliation.

The substitution of scientific truth for religious truth cannot but entail a spiritual crisis: it is difficult to be satisfied with a provisional truth, incontestable but limited, not guaranteed to console. Perhaps the lessons of historical knowledge are the most bitter, because they are ambiguous and fugitive, perpetually changing, perpetually being renewed. Marxism re-establishes an absolute. The doctrine which is now the official doctrine of China is not linked to the order of the cosmos or to the distinctive individuality of the Middle Kingdom; it is true because it reflects the order of change, which is irresistible and beneficent. Marxist-Leninism overcomes the

relativism which historical awareness inevitably brings with it, and heals the wounds inflicted, over the past century, by the technical superiority of Europe.

One wonders if Asia will tomorrow show signs of the religious intolerance which Buddhism spared it but which was the scourge of the West, or if it will interpret the new faith in such a way that the heretics will be allowed to survive, despised perhaps but not forcibly converted or conquered on the pretext of conversion.

CHAPTER IX

THE INTELLECTUALS IN SEARCH OF A RELIGION

PARALLELS between socialism and religion have frequently been drawn, and the diffusion of Christianity throughout the ancient world compared with that of Marxism in our time. The expression 'secular religion' has become a commonplace.*

Equally classic are the arguments arising from these comparisons. Does a Godless doctrine deserve to be called a religion? The faithful themselves deny the connection but insist that their belief is none-the-less compatible with the traditional faith—are not the progressive Christians a living proof of the compatibility between Communism and Catholicism?

In a sense, the quarrel is a verbal one. Everything depends on one's definition of the words involved. The doctrine provides true Communists with a global interpretation of the universe; it instils sentiments akin to those of the crusaders of all ages; it fixes the hierarchy of values and establishes the norms of good conduct. It fulfils, in the individual and in the collective soul, some of the functions which the sociologist normally ascribes to religions. As for the absence of the transcendental or the sacred, the Communists do not categorically deny it, but they recall that many societies throughout the centuries have been ignorant of the notion of a divine being without being ignorant of the way of thought and feeling, the obligations and the devotions, which the observer of today regards as religious.

* I used the expression in two articles which appeared in *La France Libre* in June-July, 1944.

These arguments side-step the real problem. One can define religion in such a way that it embraces the cults, rites and passions of the so-called primitive tribes, the teachings and practices of Confucianism and the sublime inspirations of Christ or Buddha, but what is the point, the meaning, of a secular religion in the West, in an environment impregnated with Christianity?

Economic Opinion or Secular Religion

Communism developed from an economic and political doctrine at a time when the spiritual vitality and the authority of the Churches were in decline. Passions which in other times might have expressed themselves in strictly religious beliefs were channelled into political action. Socialism appeared not so much a technique applicable to the management of enterprises or to the functioning of the economy, as a means of curing once and for all the age-old misery of mankind.

The ideologies of the Right and of the Left, Fascism as well as Communism, are inspired by the modern philosophy of immanence. They are atheist, even when they do not deny the existence of God, to the extent that they conceive the human world without reference to the transcendental. According to La Berthonnière, Descartes, however good a Catholic he may have been, can be regarded as the initiator of this sort of atheism, since he was more interested in the conquest of nature than in meditation on the hereafter. The Marxists of the second or the third International are quite ready to allow that religion is a private affair, but they regard the organisation of the commonwealth as the only serious concern.

Passions followed logically the transfer of the centre of interest. People no longer killed one another to determine which Church should be invested with the mission of interpreting the sacred scriptures and of administering the sacraments, but which party or which system offered the best chance of spreading material comfort for all in this vale of tears.

Democracy and nationalism, it is true, have aroused no less passionate fervour than the classless society. At a time when the supreme values are linked to political reality, men are just as fanatical in their devotion to national independence as to an allegedly ideal order. In this vague sense, every political movement which has agitated modern Europe has had a religious character. Yet one does not find in them the framework or the essence of a religious philosophy. In this respect Communism is unique.

The Marxist prophetism, as we have seen, conforms to the typical pattern of the Judeo-Christian prophetism. Every prophetism condemns what is and sketches an outline of what should or will be; it chooses an individual or a group to cleave a path across the no-man's land which separates the unworthy present from the radiant future. The classless society which will bring social progress without political revolution is comparable to the dreams of the millennium. The misery of the proletariat proves its vocation and the

Communist Party becomes the Church which is opposed by the bourgeois / pagans who stop their ears against the good tidings and by the socialist / Jews who have failed to recognise the Revolution which they themselves had been heralding for years.

The recriminations and prognostications can be translated into rational terms. The forces of production, developed with the help of science harnessed to industry, do not yet provide decent conditions of life for more than a minority. Tomorrow the expansion of technology, combined with a change in the system of ownership and management, will bestow on all mankind the benefits of material plenty. It is an easy transition from the Marxist prophetism to 'the great hope of the twentieth century', from revolutionary faith to the theory of economic progress.

How is it that the Marxist prophetism manages to oscillate between a reasonable opinion on the future of modern societies and a pseudo-religious dogma? How is it that it manages to inspire on the one hand the ideas and the methods of social democracy, which are those of common sense, peaceful reform and democratic liberty, and on the other hand the ideas and the methods of Communism, which are those of violence and revolution?

In the first case, the theory is toned down and it is admitted that the work of regeneration demands the concurrence of all the victims of capitalism, of all those who, without suffering personally from the system, recognise its blemishes and desire to eliminate them. This does not mean that the vocation of the proletariat is eliminated; merely that it ceases to be exclusive. By their numbers and by their sufferings, the industrial workers are called upon to play a pre-eminent role in the humanisation of modern technological societies, but they are neither alone in suffering injustice nor alone in shaping the future.

In the second case, the proletarian character of the collective saviour and of the party which represents it, is *verbally* emphasised and strengthened. Quite simply, the Party must be proclaimed the vanguard of the proletariat, however small the part which genuine flesh-and-blood industrial workers may take in the leadership and the activity of the party. The latter approximates to a Church, which is the trustee and guardian of the message of salvation. Whoever enters this Church at once receives its baptism: those genuine proletarians who refuse to follow it automatically debar themselves from the chosen class.

Treading the first path, the prophetism reduces itself to a set of opinions which vary from nation to nation and are reasonably prosaic; Marxism is

broken down into its elements —historical hypotheses, economic preferences. The second way shows us the Party / Church stiffening doctrine into dogma and elaborating an interpretative scholasticism; imbued with passionate life, the Party / Church wins over immense cohorts.

In order that the Communist system of interpretation shall never be found lacking, the delegation of the proletariat to the Party must be total and unreserved. This in turn makes it necessary to deny incontestable facts, to substitute for the real and multifarious conflicts of human life the stylised struggles of collective beings who are defined by their function in a pre-ordained destiny. From this arises the scholasticism which we have often come across in the course of the preceding pages, the interminable speculations on the infrastructure and the superstructure, the distinctions between subtle and vulgar meanings, the rejection of objectivity, and the re-writing of history.

The social-democrats renounce this scholasticism; they do not seek to reconcile the facts with the predictions of yesterday, to enclose the countless riches of human societies in a narrow conceptual framework; but, by the same token, they forfeit the prestige bestowed by the system, the certainty and conviction, the transparent future. The Communists on the other hand seek to connect each episode in their development to the total course of history, and history itself to a philosophy of nature; there is nothing they do not know, they are never wrong, and the art of the dialectic enables them to harmonise any aspect of the Soviet reality with a doctrine that can be twisted in any direction.

The combination of prophetism and scholasticism produces sentiments analogous to those of religious believers. Faith in the proletariat and in history, charity for those who suffer today and who tomorrow will inherit the earth, hope that the future will bring the advent of the classless society— the theological virtues reappear in a new guise. But this faith is attached not so much to history as to a Church whose links with the Messiah have become gradually loosened; this hope is placed in a future which, in default of being accomplished by spontaneous forces, will be produced by violence; this charity for suffering humanity hardens into indifference towards classes or nations or individuals condemned by the dialectic. Communist faith justifies all means, Communist hope forbids acceptance of the fact that there are many roads towards the Kingdom of God, Community charity does not even allow its enemies the right to die an honourable death.

It is the psychology of a sect rather than of a universal Church. The militant is persuaded that he belongs to a small number of elect who are charged with the salvation of all. The faithful, accustomed to following the twists in the line, to repeating parrot-wise the successive and contradictory interpretations of the Nazi-Soviet pact, for example, or of the 'Doctors' Plot', become in a certain sense 'new men'. According to the materialist conception, men trained after a certain method are docile to authority and completely satisfied with their lot. The engineers of the soul have no doubts about the plastic nature of the psychic material at their disposal.

At one extreme, socialism is reduced to a vague preference for the State control of the economy and for collective ownership; at the other extreme, it widens into a global system of interpretation which includes at once the entire cosmos and the ups and downs of civil strife in Guatemala.

It will be said that the Communist *faith* is distinguishable from a politico-economic *opinion* only by its intransigence, that a new faith is always intransigent, and that Churches incline to tolerance as they become undermined by scepticism. But it is not simply a matter of intransigence: nothing comparable to the secular religion of Communism has arisen out of nationalism or democracy. One could call it fanaticism, if that is the right word to designate decrees by which a single party is transfigured into the guide of the world proletariat, a single system of interpretation superimposed on the unintelligible complexity of the facts, a single road to socialism proclaimed obligatory for all. Fanatical, surely, is the Communist who divides mankind into two camps according to their attitude towards the sacred cause, the militant who compels the bourgeois/pagan to write his autobiography in conformity with the truth revealed by the proletarian State

Militants and Sympathisers

Communism is an ideology which, through the cult of the Party, the interpretative scholasticism manipulated by the revolutionary State, and the training and discipline enforced on the militants, has been transformed into a dogmatism of words and actions. Thus, one is tempted to take the concept of a secular religion either seriously or lightly according to whether one considers the point of departure or the point of arrival, the Marxism of 1890 or the Stalinism of 1950.

There is no better illustration of this uncertainty than the tragic and turbulent history of the rivalry between socialists and communists. The latter,

of course, have never had any doubts; ever since 1917 they have been denouncing their socialist brethren as traitors who went over to the capitalist camp as soon as they failed to recognise the Russian Revolution as the first step towards the fulfilment of the Marxist prophecies. The socialists, for their part, heartily denounce the cruelty of the Bolsheviks, the infamy of undemocratic socialism and the dictatorship *over* the proletariat. But they have never succeeded in quite overcoming a kind of guilt feeling: even if the road be horrible, is there another way?

Are not socialists and communists both agreed in their opposition to capitalism, are they not equally hostile to the anarchy of the market and equally in favour of planning and collective ownership? When the Bolsheviks liquidated Mensheviks and Trotskyists, when the great purges raged or when peasants who were unwilling to accept collectivisation were deported by the million, the Western socialists, humanitarian, accustomed to parliamentary methods, reacted with horror and felt almost as remote from these ferocious organisers as from the fascists themselves, Stalin has only to die, and his successors to tone down some of the extreme and almost pathological manifestations of the system, to hold out the hand of friendship to the progressives and the Christians, for the social-democratic Marxists to start wondering again. Perhaps, when all is said and done, the technique of despotism and five-year plans is the only one possible in Russia and other under-developed countries? The need for rapid industrialisation made the excesses of the terror inevitable, but the development of socialism will gradually eliminate the necessity for them. And with the democratisation of the Soviet régime the great schism will resolve itself.

These alternations of trust and despair cannot simply be attributed to the inexhaustible naivety of the socialists, fated to end up in concentration camps under every sort of régime. They arise from the basic ambiguity of the secular religion. The latter, whether fascist or communist, is no more than the dogmatic hardening of opinions which are current in leftwing or right-wing circles.

Consider, for example, the case of national-socialism. The man who sympathised with the Nazis in 1933 did not always believe in racialism; he might well have deplored the excesses of anti-Semitism, and simply affirmed the necessity of a strong government to re-establish the unity of the nation, to overcome partisan quarrels, to conduct a dynamic foreign policy. Such reserved allegiance does not only characterise the waverers or fellow-travellers; it is not unknown among those who actually belong to the party,

sometimes even in the inner circles of the party. The faith of Goering was probably scarcely more orthodox than that of the old-fashioned nationalists who rallied round the brown-shirted demagogue out of pure opportunism.

In 1955, how does the progressive Christian who is not a member of the Communist Party actually think and feel? If we revert to the book published by the worker-priests, we will find them adopting—some of them at least—the interpretation of events which is taught by the Party: "The guides of the proletariat were right. The lessons of recent political and social events prove it: Marshall Plan, E.D.C., unemployment, low salaries, Viet-Nam, Africa, poverty, housing shortage, illegality, repression".* To attribute to the Marshall Plan, which shortened by several years the period necessary for French economic reconstruction, a responsibility for poverty and low salaries represents a typical example of the substitution of dogma for fact—a substitution which is characteristic of Stalinist scholasticism.

The worker-priests came to assimilate, perhaps without being precisely aware of it, the broad lines of the Communist philosophy of history. In their book they ascribe to the working class a unique mission and special virtues. "Our class seemed to us to be beautiful in spite of its wounds, rich in authentic human values; never once did we come across a reason to disparage or underestimate it. And the prospects it opens for the history of humanity are too great and too real for the other classes to ignore it" (p. 268). One's way of thinking, they suggest, depends essentially on the class one belongs to. "By immersing ourselves completely in the proletarian conditions of life, and being constantly and intimately connected with the working masses, a certain number of us have begun to acquire (or to regain) a new mentality, a new class consciousness. We share the workers' reactions, we see things through their eyes, their minds—for example the sense of the class struggle for the suppression of classes, the feeling of being inevitably interdependent, the conviction that they cannot free themselves from capitalist exploitation unless they stick together . . ." (p. 207)* The proletarian awareness to which these Christians have acceded seems to be entirely moulded by Communist ideology: "We know now that the proletariat left to itself, without class consciousness, without organisation, will never succeed in defeating an enemy which assails it on every side and which is a hundred times superior, if not in numbers and in quality, at least in means of oppression and repression which range from straightforward brutality to hypocritical benevolence and the narcotic of religion" (p. 23o).†

* *Les Prétres-Ouvriers* (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1954), p. 268.

And here is an example of the terms in which the worker-priests judge and condemn socialist reformism: "And in countries where this bourgeois social-democracy resists, it flounders about in a morass of contradictions: repression, injustice, misery, aggressive war, all due to this 'henceforth inevitable decline', to quote the expression of the *Osservatore Romano* . . ." (p. 272).

It is true that the worker-priests remain Catholics: "If we hold steadfastly to our faith in Jesus and His Father, the masters of History and therefore of this sociological and political history through which our brothers of the proletariat live, our faith in the Church is just as keen" (p. 269). They deny that the drama of the proletariat replaces the drama of salvation. But often the expressions they use suggest that profane events have gradually taken on the significance of the sacred in the divided conscience of the progressive Christian. "We bear in our flesh the agonies of the proletariat and not one of our prayers and our Eucharists but is concerned with these agonies. . . . Our faith, which was a powerful motivating force in this carnal communion with the working class, is in no way diminished or sullied thereby" (p. 268). One imagines the Catholic Church eventually receiving the working class, henceforth prepared, thanks to its temporal emancipation, for the Gospel of Christ. Meanwhile, "we think and feel, with the Church, that without these minimum conditions of material existence 'no spiritual life is possible', that a man who is hungry cannot believe in the bounty of God, that a man who is oppressed cannot believe in His omnipotence" (p. 270). In other words, therefore, the good tidings of great joy should not have been delivered to the slaves of antiquity, before slavery had been eliminated thanks to the class struggle. . . .

* The author of *Jeunesse de l'Eglise* ascribes the culpable doubts he might experience as to the divinity Of the Church to bourgeois sin: "Or, if he yields to this doubt, it is because, twisted by his- bourgeois past, he will not have drawn from the lives and the struggles of the working class the purpose and meaning of history and the lessons of patience it instils." (*Les Evénements et la Foi,* p. 79.)

† Narcotic of religion=opium of the people.

These quotations prove that, for these generous-hearted men, these Christians hungry for self-sacrifice, Communism means more than an opinion on the economic system of today and tomorrow, even more than one ideology among others. They have passed through the first two stages on the road which leads from ideology to religion: the vocation of the proletariat and its incarnation in the Communist Party, and the interpretation of the facts of today and global history according to the dogma. The final stage is inconceivable for a Catholic: if the classless society were to solve the riddle of History, if humanity, having organised and perfected the exploitation of the planet, were to be satisfied with its lot and cured of hope, man would no longer be the creature for whom Christ was crucified but the creature to whom Marx prophesied the end of pre-history thanks to the power of the machine and the revolt of the proletariat.

The Christian can never be a genuine Communist, any more than the latter could believe in God or in Christ because the secular religion, inspired by a fundamental atheism, teaches that the destiny of man is completely fulfilled on this earth and in the temporal city. The progressive Christian closes his eyes and his mind to this basic incompatibility.

Sometimes he reduces Communism to a technique of economic organisation; he makes a radical distinction between religious faith and collective existence and refuses to recognise that the Christian Church does not tolerate this distinction any more than the secular Church. The latter does not regard Communism as a neutral technique comparable to a machine at society's disposal; the former wants to inspire the lives of each and everyone, all the time and in every sphere, and not restrict itself merely to the administration of the sacraments.

Sometimes the progressive Christian goes to the other extreme of error. He is so overwhelmed by the sufferings of the proletariat, he shares so passionately in the struggle of the Communist Party, that he uses the same words, with their Christian overtones, to describe the vicissitudes of profane history and the mysteries of sacred history. The Christian notion of history tends to merge with the Marxist notion, the civilisation of labour, the rise of the masses, the liberation of the proletariat. One does not know whether the progressive Christians aspire to a universal prosperity which would finally rescue mankind from his age-old servitude and persuade him to meditation on the hereafter, or whether the classless society, instead of the City of God, has become the object of the faith.

Neither the example of the socialists nor that of the progressive Christians enables one to trace the dividing line between members of the Party and fellow-travellers. There are Party members who think and feel in the same way as progressive Christians: they have taken to religion out of sheer devotion or self-sacrifice or in order to overcome an internal resistance which seems to them to be a relic of their bourgeois upbringing: they do not believe in dialectical materialism, they merely wish to serve. Many fellow-travellers, on the other hand, are innocent of religious nostalgia; they calculate the chances of the Party and accept without the least repugnance the system of automatic reflexes, while retaining for themselves the advantages of semi-liberty.

One will search in vain, within the Party, for one single comprehensive version of the historical dogma or the day-to-day teaching. As we have seen,* it is impossible to say precisely what the membership of the Party as a whole believes in (apart from the Party itself). When an official communique proclaims that nine doctors in the Kremlin have assassinated certain dignitaries of the régime, chosen at random among the dead, and plotted to assassinate other dignitaries who are still alive, the militants, from top to bottom of the ladder, know what they have to say (though not what they *will* have to say three months hence), but they do not know the causes and objectives of the operation. No-one in his heart of hearts can unreservedly accept the interpretation which reverberates from one end of the Communist universe to the other in countless motions adopted at countless meetings—and each man chooses for himself his own esoteric interpretation.

* Cf. Chapter IV, pp. 112-113.

There is another and no less disturbing ambiguity when the State decree affects the broad lines of the dogma. What is the meaning which the believers —men of the inner circles of the Party, higher officials, local bosses—give to the major concepts? Do they believe in the identification of the Party and the proletariat in Great Britain, where the Party scarcely exists? Do they believe in the withering away of the Soviet State, when no régime has ever commanded such a vast police force? How can they envisage the classless society when a new hierarchy is gradually crystallising?

We have made the distinction between 'Churchmen' and 'faithful', between those whose primary allegiance is to the Party and those who first and foremost subscribe to the doctrine. The distinction does not coincide with that between the militant and the sympathiser. The militant has taken the

decisive step and accepted the discipline, while the sympathiser remains on the threshold. But the latter is not necessarily one of the faithful, in the sense in which we have used the term, nor is the former always a true man of the Church. Certain fellow-travellers ignore the vocation of the proletariat or the classless society and simply submit to the historical necessity revealed by the unification of eight hundred million men under the same laws. There are some militants who are idealists intent on self-sacrifice, and some fellow-travellers who are cynics anxious to further their careers.

Where, then, is the true Communist to be found? In theory, he must have been through the three stages—the cult of the Party, the interpretative scholasticism, the training of the militant—but once he has graduated he acquires the right to 're-think' the dogma in his own way. He will adopt in his own mind a symbolic version of the Party-Church nexus, of the world revolution—a version which will ultimately be identical with that of the men who refuse to get involved. The militants are not all 'true believers'. In fact, they are quite conscious both of the other side of the picture and the esoteric meanings. In spite of this knowledge, they retain their allegiance to the movement and their expectation of a future which is at once inevitable and shaped by the Party.

Must one really take seriously a secular religion which teaches its dignitaries as much scepticism as faith, whose doctrine eludes one's grasp, and which exists as such only through a series of decrees which are intellectually absurd? As soon as one rejects the idea of the identification of the Party with the proletariat and the interpretative scholasticism, the religion dissolves into a conglomeration of opinions. Can a durable religion be based on affirmations which are contrary to the facts and to common sense?

The answer to such a question, I fear, is far from being established.

From Civil Religion to Stalinism

The intellectuals invented ideologies, systems of interpretation of the social world which imply an order of values and suggest reforms to be accomplished, upheavals to be feared or hoped for. Those who, in the name of Reason, condemned the Catholic Church came to accept a secular dogma because they were dissatisfied with partial knowledge or because they coveted the power which is given only to the high-priests of the Truth.

The French philosophers of the eighteenth century were already intellectuals in the modern sense of the word; they earned their incomes from their pens and claimed the right, which they used freely, to express their opinions, most often critically, on the subjects of history or politics. Neither in their thought nor for their means of livelihood did they depend on the Church; they were connected with the rich rather than with the old nobility, and they propagated a conception of the world which was radically opposed to that of Catholic and monarchical France.

The conflict between the clerics and the philosophers was historically but not metaphysically inevitable. The Church does not have to condemn the effort to organise the earthly existence of the greatest number as comfortably as possible; it can allow the right of free enquiry in matters on which Revelation is silent. The desire for knowledge and technical progress is now regarded as meritorious, even if the encyclicals continue to condemn scientific optimism about human nature and maintain the principle of authority in matters of dogma and morality. Once the philosophy of the *Ancien Régime* was eliminated from Catholic doctrine, intellectuals had no longer, in theory, any quarrel with the Church.

The quarrel was prolonged in France by the social and political role which the Church so often played and which was always attributed to it. A hierarchical society which proclaims a revealed truth, the Church finds it difficult to break off its connections with the powers and the parties which also refuse to accept that authority can come from below or that men, in their weakness, are capable of governing themselves.

The compromising of the Church with anti-democratic movements* is not the only, or even the principal, cause of the persistent rivalry between clerics and intellectuals. Perhaps the clerics found it difficult to resign themselves to the existence of a would-be lay State; perhaps the intellectuals were loth to accept a subordinate position. Freed from ecclesiastical despotism, they aspired to replace what they thought to have destroyed.

Certain intellectuals of the Left, revelling in their atheism and radically hostile to the religious life, sought to spread unbelief as missionaries spread belief, convinced that they were liberating mankind by destroying the gods and pulling down their altars. Others were disquieted by the irremediable decline of Christianity and improvised dogmas which might be reconciled with rationalism and be capable of reestablishing spiritual unity. Bolshevism combines both aims: it is inspired by the combative ardour of the godless,

and it has elaborated an orthodoxy which claims to conform to the teachings of science. Communism is the first intellectuals' religion to have succeeded—but it was by no means the first to make a bid for success.

* This remark does not apply in all Western countries or even, in France, to the whole of the nineteenth century.

It was Auguste Comte, perhaps, who formulated more clearly than anyone else the ideas which inspire the search for a rationalist religion to replace Christianity. The essence of these ideas is as follows. Theology and metaphysics are incompatible with positive knowledge. The religions of the past are losing their vitality because science no longer permits one to believe what the Church teaches. Faith will gradually disappear or will decline into superstition. The death of God leaves a void in the human soul; the needs of the heart remain and must be satisfied by a new Christianity. Only the intellectuals are capable of inventing, and possibly preaching, a substitute for the ancient dogmas which might be acceptable to the scientists. Finally, the social functions which were fulfilled by the Church are with us still. What will the communal morality be based on? How will the unity of belief, without which civilisation itself is imperilled, be safeguarded or restored among the members of the collectivity?

We know how Auguste Comte sought to answer this historic challenge. According to his system, the laws established by science reveal a cosmic order, a permanent order of human societies, and an order of historical development. The dogma is scientific and yet it offers to the mind definitive truths and to the heart an object of love. The society of the future will be total but not totalitarian. It will embrace all the wealth and complexity of human nature, it will balance power with public opinion, and force with charity; it will make the past present; it will open the road to Progress without revolution; it will accomplish Humanity.

Except in Brazil, Positivism has never transcended the limits of a sect. It never became the doctrine of a movement or a party, any more than the 'New Christianity' of Saint-Simon and his followers. The work of a mathematician, it remained the creed of a small, eccentric group.

The search for a civil religion originated well before the French Revolution. The chapter of the *Social Contract* which Jean-Jacques Rousseau devotes to this question expresses the two ideas which he himself had picked up from the works of his predecessors and which haunted the minds of the eighteenth-century theorists. The separation of the temporal and the spiritual power is a

principle of weakness: "The humble Christians changed their tune, and soon one saw this alleged kingdom of the other world become, under a visible leader, the most violent despotism in this one. Meanwhile, since there has always been a prince, and civil laws, there resulted from this double power a perpetual conflict of jurisdiction, which made any reasonable policy impossible in Christian states; for men were never able to discover whom they were supposed to obey, the master or the priest." And Rousseau adds: "Hobbes was the only man who dared to propose that the two heads of the Eagle should be united and everything brought back to a state of political unity, without which neither State nor Government will be properly constituted." One remembers the famous phrase: "a society of true Christians would no longer be a society of men"—which Hitler would have approved.

Political preoccupations—what religion will best promote the power and prosperity of the State?—might have prompted Rousseau to proclaim, like Machiavelli, the superiority of national religions. His own religion—Christianity reduced to a sort of theism—makes him hestitate on this slope. He does not deny the advantages of the national religion which "unites divine worship with a love of the law" and which, "by making the fatherland the object of the adoration of the citizens, teaches them that to serve the State is to serve its tutelary God". But, since it is based on error, it misleads men; "it makes a people bloodthirsty and intolerant", and puts it into a natural state of warfare with all the others. Rousseau finally settles for a purely civil creed which will make each citizen enjoy his duties. The existence of God, the After Life, and the punishment of the guilty—such are the dogmas of this religion which will bind the citizen to his State without forcing him to look on every other State as his enemy. Between the strictly national, or pagan, religion whose restoration could not be regarded as possible or desirable by a philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment, and the universal religion of redemption which inspires indifference to temporal grandeur, the civil religion would avoid fanaticism without weakening the individual's devotion to the sovereign or introducing into the body social a principle of division and discord.

The French revolutionary cults shared something of the ambiguity of Rousseau's civil religion. Their basis was patriotism, "a love of the ideal society, based on justice, much more than love of the national soil".* But, at the same time, the legislators did not agree to the separation of Church and State. The latter divorced itself from the old Church but tried to keep a religious character, to impose itself "on the masses under the aspect of a

Church with its feasts and its obligatory rites". Reason, the new supreme being, would be the object of a belief which, purged of all superstitition, would serve as the foundation of a fatherland destined by its virtue for a limitless future.

The revolutionary cults remained a unique and short-lived episode, although they had a symbolic and historical significance which did not escape August Comte. Neither the nostalgia for a national religion, nor the feeling that the Revolution would introduce a civic and universal faith, disappeared with the restoration of the monarchy and the Catholic Church.

Shintoism represents the equivalent of a national religion; it comprises, besides elements which plunge into the most distant past, the cult of the Emperor as the descendant of the Sun and the embodiment of eternal Japan. The Japanese aristocracy, when it made up its mind to borrow from the West the secrets of military power, simultaneously decided to revivify these ancestral beliefs and practices so that technical westernisation would not compromise the authenticity of Japanese culture. On the morrow of the First World War, Ludendorff offered Shintoism as a model for the German people in search of spiritual unity; he reiterated the sayings of the theorists from Machiavelli to Rousseau on the drawbacks of dualism and the fervour induced in the masses by the conviction of fighting and dying for God and the Nation alike.

* A. Mathiez, *Contribution à l'histoire religieuse de la Révolution* (Paris, 1937), p. 30, quoted by H. Gouhier in *La Jeunesse d'Auguste Comte et la formation du positivisme* (Paris, 1930), p. 8.

The new 'German Christianity' was a conscious attempt to nationalise* a religion of salvation. In his funeral oration for Hindenburg Hitler used the old Germanic word *Walhalla,* and the young Hitlerites dabbled in a species of fire-worship. But one is tempted to impute these episodes as much to the over-exuberance of boy scouts as to a serious revival of pagan rites. In the event of victory in the Second World War, Hitler would probably have launched an all-out war against Christianity; he would have invoked materialism and racialism, the confused jumble of ideas opposed to democratic rationalism rather than 'German Christianity' or the 'Teutonic faith'. Racial inequality, the leader-principle, the unity of the nation, the Third Reich—these themes, not so much organised into a system as orchestrated by Nazi propaganda, would have inspired the running of the State and the education of the élite; they would have established a hierarchy

of values, excited ardent passions, inspired the communion of the faithful; they would have been sanctified by quasi-religious ceremonies. Would they, in a civilisation bearing the imprint of Christianity, have been experienced in a genuinely religious way? The same question arises in the case of Communism, which seemed to offer at last a prescription for the substitute religion which the militants of the French Revolution, the Positivists and the Saint-Simonists dreamed of.

"The Revolution did not adopt a Church. Why? Because it was a Church itself"—Michelet's dictum can be applied to Communism. Like the civil religion, it sanctifies the duties of the individual in relation to the Party, the socialist State, and the future of humanity. An official religion as soon as the party is in power, it remains in opposition, in its esoteric teaching, a universal religion. In the same way as Positivism, it claims to gather up the creations of the past and transmit them to the society which will fulfil the vocation of humanity. It breaks with the individualism of the age of Enlightenment, but it promises happiness for everyone. It shows no pity for the weak nor trust in the common man, but it justifies the building up of the socialist State by humanitarian sentiments, and the unconditional authority of the leaders by the necessity to instruct the masses. It harnesses science to its purposes, but in the name of science. It turns Western rationalism upside down, but it continues to pay lip service to it.

What is the explanation of its success? The Marxist prophetism transfigures an evolutionary pattern into a sacred history of which the classless society will be the outcome. It gives a disproportionate significance to certain institutions— the system of ownership and the functioning of the economy —and makes planning by an all-powerful State a decisive stage in history. The intelligentsia lapses all too easily into these errors, to which its devotion to left-wing principles predisposes it. Obsessed by the need to increase national productivity, it is ready to borrow the Soviet short-cut to material plenty.

The content of the dogma is an interpretation of history: Stalinism has been diffused in a century convulsed by catastrophes. Just as astrology was not immediately eliminated by scientific astronomy, so positive history fails to destroy historical mythologies. Before the advent of modern physics, the order of the cosmos offered itself to the awestruck eyes of observers. Until recently, every society believed itself to be unique and exemplary. Unconscious of the immensity of time, they did not accept their modest place in a mysterious process of evolution. The historical mythologies do not

express anachronistic beliefs so much as a very human revolt against the lessons of experience.

In our day, technological progress is definitely the basic factor. It is this that uproots the old gimcrack foundations of civilisation, and our contemporaries do not seem to envisage any higher aim than the power and prosperity created by the machine. The priority of the interests of labour is confused with the causal primacy of the forces of production, and this muddled synthesis is regarded as a conquest of knowledge.

Marxist ideology discerns a fixed order of development under the blind, anarchic muddle of human interests. Each man obeys only himself and all men together produce what the higher intelligence ought to have willed. The capitalists, in search of profits, are dragging to its death the system to which they owe their success. From the struggle of the classes will arise the classless society. The perfect market, like the Hegelian 'Ruse of Reason', uses the egoism of individuals with a view to the greater good of all. But there is a decisive difference: the liberal regards men as basically imperfect and resigns himself to a system where the good will be the result of countless actions and never the object of a conscious choice. In the last resort, he subscribes to the pessimism which sees politics as the art of creating the conditions in which the vices of men contribute to the good of the State. The Marxist admits, as far as the past is concerned, the heterogeneousness of intentions and events, but he guarantees escape from the tyranny of environment once the skein of hidden forces is unravelled. Thanks to his knowledge of the laws of history, man will attain the goal to which he aspires. Foreknowledge of the future makes it possible to manipulate both enemies and supporters.

It is at this precise point that the ideology turns into a dogma. The collective saviour no longer submits to history; he creates it, he builds the socialist State, he moulds the future. This transfiguration of the party into a Messiah remains a sectarian aberration just so long as the party vegetates and struggles in impotent and irreconcilable opposition. The seizure of power authenticates its claims. The more closely the party is identified with the State, the more genuinely it can claim to represent and embody the cause of the proletariat.

The explanation of the unique success of Leninist-Stalinism among all the attempts at a substitute religion is in the last analysis quite simple: it was the victory of the Revolution which allowed the diffusion of Communism, not the appeal of the secular religion which prepared the way for the ten days which

shook the world. Unarmed prophets inevitably perish; the future of the secular religion primarily depends on the balance of power.

Secular Clericalism

The intellectuals of France were the first to undertake the search for a substitute religion. Today, their colleagues on the other side of the Iron Curtain are consolidating the legitimacy of Soviet absolutism just as the jurists of old consolidated that of of the royal absolutism; they interpret the sacred scriptures, the declarations of the party congresses and those of the Secretary-General, after the fashion of the Christian theologians. The left-wing intelligentsia, which began by claiming freedom, ends up by submitting to the discipline of party and State.

Has the ideology in fact become the equivalent of a religion? Once again, it is difficult to give a positive answer. Under the Soviet régime, as in the Byzantine tradition, the head of the State is identical with the head of the Church. The ideology, in the same way as the transcendental faith of old, determines all that really matters; it justifies authority, and it promises, not to the individual but to individuals in the mass, a just retribution in the historical hereafter, that is to say the earthly future. But Communism does not see itself as a religion, since it regards all religion as anachronism; it fights the Church in the name of atheism, or brings it to heel in the name of socialism—as with every other institution. Its totalitarianism enlarges out of all proportion the meaning of a partial doctrine so that it can appear to embrace every aspect of human power.

The ambivalence of the relations between Christians and Communists might well have encouraged the governments of the Peoples' Democracies to instigate heretical ventures comparable to those of 'German Christianity', to reconcile the Christian faith with fragments of the official ideology.. This does not, however, seem to be the dominant tendency on the other side of the Iron Curtain.* The Communist authorities endeavour first of all to break the bonds between the national Church and the Papacy: any international system is intolerable to them. They then impose on the ecclesiastical dignitaries a verbal allegiance to the State orthodoxy—but this is no more than they demand from musicians, chess players or novelists. They endeavour to impart a political character to the activities, or at least to the language, of the 'popes' or bishops, but they do not encourage a religious interpretation of the historical ideologies. It is in the West rather than in Eastern Europe that

certain believers find it difficult to distinguish between the drama of the Crucifixion and the drama of the proletariat, between the classless society and the Kingdom of Heaven.

* There have, however, been reports of the activity in Poland of 'patriot priests' who are Marxists as well as Catholics. The new Catholic seminary in Warsaw is said to be giving priests a Marxist as well as a Catholic training. Cf. *New York Times,* December 19, 1954. In this connection also, W. Banning's *Der Kommunismus als Politische-Soziale Weltreligion* (Berlin, 1953) is worth referring to.

Communism is thus not so much a religion as a political attempt to find a substitute for religion in an ideology erected into a State orthodoxy—an orthodoxy which goes on cherishing claims and pretensions abandoned by the Catholic Church. The theologians now admit fairly and squarely that the Christian Revelation cannot compete in the realms of astronomy or physics, that the knowledge it contains about these subjects is rudimentary, and expressed in terms accessible to the minds of the peoples living at the time of Christ. The physicist learns nothing from the Bible about nuclear particles; he will not learn much more about them from the sacred scriptures of dialectical materialism.

The Christian faith may be said to be total, in the sense that it inspires the whole of existence; it was totalitarian when it refused to acknowledge the autonomy of profane activities. The Communist faith becomes totalitarian as soon as it aspires to be total, since it cannot create the illusion of totality except by imposing official truths, by subjecting to the orders of the central power activities whose very essence demands autonomy.

One can conceive how poets might be animated by the Communist faith, as others by the Christian faith, how physicists or engineers might passionately desire to serve the proletariat. But it is essential that this conviction and this devotion should be authentic and not dictated from outside by the bureaucrats in charge of culture. It is essential that the latter should leave the artist free to find his own forms and the scientist his own truths. Socialist realism or dialectical materialism cannot mobilise an entire community into a unanimously experienced creed or philosophy. A pseudo-unity is obtained by subordinating the specific meaning of each spiritual universe to the social function which is assigned to it, by setting up equivocal or false propositions as the basis of a doctrine which is alleged to be at once scientific and philosophical.

We in the West have no need to look for a rival orthodoxy to compete with historical materialism—as though a philosophy could or should establish the principles and concepts of the natural sciences and the broad lines of their results— the more so because criticism alone is enough to exorcise the ghost of Soviet cultural unity and because this artificial synthesis will eventually dissolve of its own accord. Already the mathematicians, physicists and biologists know that Marxist-Leninism may be able to offer a terminology—at the beginning and the end of the book—to synchronise the results of their researches with the official theories, but not an instrument of exploration. The historians, even if they admit on the whole the validity of the Marxist categories, feel themselves to be the prisoners of an orthodoxy which is both absolute and ever-changing. It is true that Catholic dogma, apart from unprovable affirmations relating to subjects which are beyond the grasp of human reason, contained the summary or the systematisation of an imperfect scientific knowledge. But having shed this burden of profane acquirements, Catholicism was able to purge itself without betraying its principles—to go deeper, in fact, and closer to its own essence. The Communist orthodoxy, on the other hand, could not purge itself or allow a rational expression of scientific problems without splitting itself up into its component parts, without dissolving into a conglomerate of more or less equivocal opinions on the society of today and tomorrow.

The ideology becomes a dogma by acquiescing in absurdity. Once it is acknowledged that in every society a minority exercises the leading functions, the assimilation of the party dictatorship to the dictatorship of the proletariat collapses immediately, and all that remains is to compare from experience the advantages and the risks of the single party with those of a parliament elected by peaceful competition. If the claim to universality were dropped—not necessarily that of the Marxist prophetism but merely the Leninist version — the bluff would be called. The socialist society would remain the objective of historical evolution, but there would be many roads leading to it. The social-democratic parties would no longer be traitors but brothers; they would fulfil the redemptory function in the West, where the rigours of Bolshevik technology are unnecessary. In other words, the Communists would accept sincerely the interpretation which is suggested to them with anxious goodwill by those Marxists who have not taken leave of their senses, who admire the five-year plans but detest the concentration camps. The Communists would really believe what they now pay lip service to, on orders, when the interest of the Soviet Union demands it.

Such a conversion seems an easy one, yet it would be enough to call the essentials of the dogma into question. If the identification of the proletariat with the Communist Party is not universal and unquestionable, the Revolution of 1917 loses the place which is assigned to it in the sacred history and becomes no more than a lucky coup. In this case, how can one foretell which countries are destined for the harsh benefits of accelerated industrialisation, how, if the supporters of the Second International are no longer excommunicated, maintain that the transition from one régime to another demands a violent break? Without the idea of a revolution which marks the end of pre-history, the Soviet reality would be no more than what in fact it is—a brutal method of modernisation under the command of a single party nominated not by destiny but by the unforeseeable vicissitudes of human conflict.

If the Russian Communist Party sticks to its claim to represent and embody the cause of the world proletariat, it must plunge ever deeper into the mysteries of the esoteric scholasticism. If it renounces this claim, it abdicates completely. Soon, adopting the counsels of social-democratic wisdom, it would begin to share its disabilities. Bourgeois and boring as the British Labour Party, recovered from its illusions and cured of terror, it would advance resolutely towards a sort of twentieth-century Louis-Philippism.

When all is said and done, isn't this conversion inevitable? Isn't it already beginning to happen before our eyes? Already the Party seems to be drawing in its horns and restricting its activities. It has allowed some liberty to scientific controversy and tolerated literary works—novels and plays—which ridicule certain aspects of the régime. The extreme and almost monstrous lengths to which the enslavement of the creative intellect had been carried during the last years of Stalin's life have been attenuated. The interpretative scholasticism remains obligatory, but it does not permanently maintain a sort of logical insanity. The régime is becoming more bourgeois and broad-minded and in practice if not in theory is tending to renounce the universality of Marxist-Leninism.

The return to normal life, the waning of ideological ardour, was bound to come sooner or later. The Revolution may be permanent, but the revolutionary spirit evaporates. The third generation of leaders, if not the second, may heed the lesson of Cineas and renounce impossible conquests. How, in the long run, could the stability of a bureaucratic despotism be combined with the proselytism of a conquering sect? The revolutionary ideal,

orientated towards the future, lives on illusions; but the main characteristics of the existing Soviet order cannot easily be ignored.

The Stalinist régime overcame the contradiction between the justification of present authority and the expectation of a perfect future by simultaneously resorting to terror and ideology, by exalting the present not for its own sake but as a stage on the road to the classless society. Meanwhile, the results of industrialisation, the consolidation of the new ruling class, the gradual eclipse of the promethean act which originated the superhuman enterprise—all this has conspired to undermine a faith which dissolves into opinions as soon as it ceases to be animated by fanaticism. Such, in the long run, seems to me to be the most likely prospect. It would be wrong to conclude from this that the nightmare will vanish, that the imprint of Marxist-Leninist training will somehow fade and the unity of the bourgeois and Communist civilisations be miraculously re-established. Between belief and disbelief, between total adherence to the Stalinist scholasticism and categorical rejection of the mental universe of the Party, there is room for many intermediate stages. Doubts about details of interpretation do not necessarily affect the solidity of the whole. The main concepts of the doctrine are preserved, and the militants continue to reason in terms of relations of production, social classes, feudalism, capitalism and imperialism.

Perhaps the Communist way of thought and action survives the loss of the faith longer than the conceptual apparatus. Intransigence turned against the comrades of yesterday; the tendency to follow to the bitter end the logic or the alleged logic of the struggle, to see the world in black and white; reluctance to admit the fragmentation of problems, the non-unity of the planet and the plurality of doctrines; these hangovers from the training he has received often characterise the ex-Communist, the unfrocked priest of a militant sect.

Probably the intellectual has more difficulty than the common man in freeing himself from this ideology which, like the State which derives from it, is his especial handiwork. The Soviet government rules in the name of a doctrine elaborated by an intellectual whose life was spent in libraries and interpreted for the past century by countless other intellectuals. Under a Communist régime the intellectuals, sophists rather than philosophers, rule the roost. The examining magistrates who unmask deviations, the writers coerced into socialist realism, the engineers and managers who are supposed to execute the plans and to interpret the ambiguous orders of the central

authority—all must be dialecticians. The Secretary-General of the Party, master and arbiter over the lives of millions of men. is also an intellectual: at the end of a triumphal career he offers to the faithful a theory of capitalism and socialism—as though a book represented the highest accomplishment. The emperors of old were often poets or thinkers; for the first time the emperor actually reigns *qua* dialectician, interpreter of the doctrine and of history.

Capitalists, bankers, aristocrats—all those who, in a parliamentary democracy, bar the intellectuals' road to power—have disappeared. In the eighteenth century, the intellectuals denounced the concentration of enormous riches in the institutions of the Church, but they accepted without scruple the protection of the rich merchants or *fermiers-généraux.* They attacked inequalities of personal status and pleaded the cause of the rising bourgeoisie. Before the French Revolution, the left-wing intellectual did not resent commerce or competition or well-earned fortunes, but wealth that was either inherited or sequestered, and discriminations of birth. In every period, he has set himself up as the adversary of the powerful, first the Church, then the nobility, and finally the bourgeoisie. Now, however, in the case of the bureaucratic dialecticians, he seems to have acquired a sudden tolerance, as though he saw in them his own likeness.

The Communist State needs managers to direct factories, and writers, professors and psychologists to spread the doctrine. Both the engineers at grips with brute matter and the engineers in charge of souls enjoy substantial advantages: prestige and glamour, a high standard of living, the sense of participating in a stirring achievement. They are not so ingenuous as to be taken in by propaganda for the masses, but they are too keen on their privileges to refuse to justify the regime and their own docility towards it. Thus they combine belief with scepticism, verbal allegiance with mental reservations; they are incapable either of wholeheartedly accepting an irrational dogmatism or of shaking off the spell of an elusive orthodoxy.

Can they not, in the final resort, invoke the example of the transcendental religions? Christianity brought its message to the slaves as well as to the kings; it taught that men were equal in the eyes of God in spite of social hierarchies. The Church nevertheless legitimised the *de facto* authority and assuaged the conscience of the powerful. And there were times when it aspired to reign on this earth. How could the progressive intellectuals refuse to offer their talents to a State which proclaims the true doctrine, to the

building up of a society which conforms with the hopes of revolutionary rationalism and which is generous to experts and men of letters—*providing they obey?*

Marx called religion the opium of the people. Whether it wants to or not, the Church consolidates the established injustice. It helps men to support and to forget their ills instead of curing them. Obsessed by the hereafter, the believer is indifferent to temporal things.

Marxist ideology, as soon as a State has built it up into an orthodoxy, lays itself open to the same criticism: it also teaches the masses obedience and confirms the authority of the rulers. Moreover, Christianity has never given the rulers a completely free hand. Even the oriental Churches reserved the right to condemn an unworthy sovereign; the Tsar, though titular head of the Church, did not control the dogma. The Secretary-General of the Communist Party retains for himself the liberty, whenever circumstances require it, to rewrite the history of the Communist Party which constitutes the essence of the Stalinist dogma. The concept of the classless society is emptied of meaning as the régime born of the Revolution becomes stabilised into an old-fashioned bureaucratic despotism. Justification by means of the historical hereafter declines, with the famous trials, into a linguistic comedy: the 'other world' is not so much the future as the present reality transfigured by the words which are used to define it.

It will be said that the Communist religion in our time has a quite different meaning from the Christian religion. The Christian opium makes the people passive, the Communist opium incites them to revolt. Undoubtedly, the Marxist-Leninist ideology has contributed to the training if not the recruitment of revolutionaries. Lenin and his comrades obeyed not so much a doctrine as a political instinct, a taste for action and the will to power. The Marxist prophetism nevertheless orientated their lives and aroused an infinite hope. What did millions of corpses matter beside the classless society!

Even now that it has been hardened and sterilised by dogmatism, the Marxist ideology continues to exercise a revolutionary function in the newly-awakened countries of Asia and Africa. It encourages the mobilisation of the masses, it cements the unity of the intellectuals, bewildered by the dispersion of the religious sects. As an instrument of action it remains effective. Elsewhere, in France for example, it is quite otherwise. There, the cult of the

Revolution and the pathetic apostrophisings of history represent a sort of escapism. The yearning for the Apocalypse does not inspire impatience for reform but resigned acceptance of present reality combined with verbal refusal, which is the point of honour of this so-called non-conformism.

This is not to deny that even in France millions of men are waiting for an event, terrible as a cosmic catastrophe, intoxicating as a carnival, which will alter their whole destiny. The argument which impresses so many progressive Christians—how to imbue the lives of the poor and the unfortunate with meaning and hope—had no force for a mind like that of Simone Weil, who could not conceive that faith could involve the sacrifice of truth. One respects the believers, but one must combat error.

The Stalinist religion mobilises the masses with a view to the seizure of power and rapid industrialisation; it sanctifies the discipline of the fighters and the builders; it adjourns until after the Revolution, and then into a future which recedes further and further as one advances towards it, the moment when the people will gather the fruits of their long patience.

The Communist régime which has put an end to a century of troubles in China is certainly more effective, and perhaps more concerned with the lot of ordinary men, than the régimes which preceded it. It is useless to regret that these reforms were not brought about at smaller cost, without the regimentation of the entire people and the massive liquidations. Yet, even so, one cannot but be hostile to the secular religion.

He who does not believe in God is not necessarily hostile to the religions of redemption which proclaim eternal truths: that man's social destiny is not the be-all and the end-all of his existence; that the hierarchy of wealth and authority does not reflect the hierarchy of values; that worldly failure is sometimes the road to higher success; and that men are united by a mysterious fraternity in spite of the free-for-all struggle.

He who does not believe in the Marxist prophetism must denounce the secular religion, even if, here and there, it produces desirable changes. It is a superstition which encourages turn by turn violence and passivity, devotion also and heroism, but finally scepticism, mixed with fanaticism, war against the unbelievers even though the faith has gradually emptied itself of its substance. It will prevent human friendship and brotherhood, on this side of politics or beyond it, until the day when, rendered otiose by the *embourgeoisement* of the bosses and the relative contentment of the masses, it

will decline into a humdrum, commonplace ideology and will no longer evoke either hope or horror.

It would be wrong to object that in our age religion must logically be secular since, according to the dominant philosophy, the destiny of mankind goes no further than the rational organisation of the planet. Atheism, however sure of itself, neither implies not justifies ideological dogmatism. The separation of Church and State, which is the origin of the peculiar greatness of the West, does not demand a unanimous faith in the double nature of man. It does not even demand that a majority of the citizens should continue to believe in the Revelation. It survives, in the century of unbelief, provided that the State itself does not profess to be the embodiment of an idea or the sole witness to the truth.

Perhaps a prophetism is the heart and soul of all action. It challenges the world and affirms the dignity of the human mind in defiance or aspiration. But when rulers, proud of a successful revolution, seize upon a prophetism in order to establish their power and confound their enemies, the secular religion is born, condemned from the start to become petrified into an orthodoxy or to dissolve into indifference. The men of the West have remained too Christian to deify the temporal city. How can the pundits of the Soviet law maintain the revolutionary fervour? If the reality satisfies the living, the time of indignation and ferment is over. If it disappoints them, how will it be acknowledged as the road towards the millennium?

The secular religion will probably resist for some time the contradiction which haunts it. But in the West it represents no more than an inevitable step towards the end of Hope.

THE DESTINY OF THE INTELLECTUALS

IT would be tempting to compose a diptych on the panels of which were painted the two contrasting images of the intellectuals under a Sovietised régime and the intellectuals in France.

On the one side, large numbers of experts and men of letters seem to be alienated: the former do not acknowledge as legitimate and beneficent the authority of the managers or financiers, the latter indignantly protest against the intrigues of the politicians and the brutalities of the police, and feel a sense of responsibility in the face of human misery— starving peasants in India, ill-treated South African negroes, the oppressed of all races and all classes, ex-Communists persecuted by McCarthy, worker-priests disciplined by the Vatican.

On the other side, in the People's Democracies, experts and men of letters sign motions and manifestoes against the very same men and the very same events which arouse the anger of their Western colleagues: the rearmament of Western Germany, the execution of the Rosenbergs, the conspiracies of the Vatican and Washington against peace, etc. They have retained the right to indignation, but only at the expense of the capitalist world which they are not free to know objectively or to visit. They accept the reality which surrounds them, and deny the other, while the left-wing intelligentsia in free Europe does precisely the opposite.

One could also paint a third picture, that of the ex-Communist or the anti-Communist in the West, who subscribes to the same values as the Communists but regards the bourgeois democracies as less unfaithful to his ideal than the People's Democracies. In some cases he will sign every conceivable manifesto—for the Rosenbergs and against the Soviet concentration camps, against the rearmament of Germany and for the liberation of Hungarian, Roumanian or Bulgarian social-democrats, against the Moroccan police and also against the brutal suppression of the East Berlin riots of June 17, 1953. In other cases he will, for preference, sign one type of manifesto—for example against the Soviet concentration camps, because he obeys the logic of the struggle and perceives the difference, both quantitatively and qualitatively, between Stalinist repression and bourgeois repression.

I doubt whether any of these three categories of intellectuals—the Communists of Moscow, the Communists or 'progressives' of Western Europe, and the anti-Communists of Washington, London or Paris—are really satisfied with their lot. I doubt whether the Soviet intelligentsia is as integrated with the régime as it appears to be from a distance, or the French intelligentsia as rebellious as it gives people to believe and perhaps believes itself.

The intellectuals of the two nation-empires, the Soviet Union and the United States, are both, though in a very different way, caught up in a system which is identified with the State. Neither counter-ideology nor counter-State offers itself as an alternative.

This quasi-unanimity does not result from the same methods, nor does it express itself in the same forms. The 'American way of life' is the negation of what the European intellectual means by the word ideology. Americanism does not formulate itself as a system of concepts or propositions; it knows nothing of the 'collective saviour', the end of history, the determining cause of historical 'becoming', or the dogmatic negation of religion; it combines respect for the constitution, homage for individual initiative, a humanitarianism inspired by strong but vague beliefs which are fairly indifferent to the rivalries between the Churches (only Catholic 'totalitarianism' is considered disquieting), the worship of science and efficiency. It does not involve any detailed orthodoxy or official doctrine. It is learned at school, and society enforces it. Conformism if you like, but a conformism which is rarely felt to be tyrannical since it does not forbid free discussion in matters of religion, economics or politics. No doubt the American non-conformist, the man whose sympathies are with the Communists, feels the weight of collective disapproval, even in the absence of repression. The individual cannot question the ways of thought and the institutions which are regarded as an integral part of the national idea without becoming suspect of a criminal lack of patriotism.

On the face of it, the Soviet ideology is the exact antithesis of the American non-ideology. It claims to be based on a materialist metaphysic; it implies an apparent solidarity beween day-to-day measures and the ultimate destination of humanity. It puts every aspect of practical experience into theoretical form, whereas the Americans incline towards a pragmatic justification of all decisions, even those of a spiritual order. It is the State which proclaims the doctrinal truth and imposes it on society; it is the State

which formulates the version of the dogma applicable at any given moment. The State is above the law and it gives free rein to the police, whereas the United States continues to cherish and in large measure to respect the supremacy of the judicial power.

But one cannot help asking oneself whether the Marxist ideology, which originated in Western Europe, is a faithful expression of the Soviet persona. If one discarded the interpretative scholasticism, wouldn't one find the elements of a completely national ideology; five-year plans, managerialism, the function of the political vanguard, the choice of an élite, the collective exploitation of the soil, the practical hero, symbol of the new order. This ideology would have as its origin the Russia which emerged from the Revolution rather than the speculations of the young Marx. In the same way, one can imagine an ideology peculiar to the United States, which would express the special characteristics of American economy and society—the cult of success; individual initiative and adaptation to the group; moral inspiration and humanitarian action; the violence of competition together with a sense of the rules of the game; optimism about the future and rejection of existential anguish; the reducing of every situation to technically soluble problems; traditional hostility to authority and to the trusts side by side with acceptance of military power and vast corporations, and so on.

The integration of the experts in the United States and in Russia is the logical consequence of the conditions of research. Physicists are employed in the laboratories of the great capitalist companies, the Soviet State trusts, or the atomic energy commission. They carry on their work in common; they submit to the obligations of military secrecy; they are wage-earners; they are highly privileged (in Russia even more than in the United States); they have lost the independence of the amateur or of the liberal professions. In the capitalist democracy there are certain experts—doctors, lawyers and so on—who still hold out and retain their independence. But it will not be long before the subordination of the expert to the enterprise which employs him has become the general rule in every industrial society.

The collectivity places the acquisition of a utilisable knowledge above the maintenance of general culture. Even those who yesterday would have been men of culture are today turning into a species of experts. In the Soviet Union, as in the United States, the management of men is based on a science and a technique. Specialists in 're-writing', in advertising and publicity, in electoral propaganda, in psychotechnology, teach how to speak, to write and to organise labour in a way that will make their fellow-men either satisfied or

indignant, passive or violent, according to the needs of the hour. The psychology which serves as a basis for their work is not necessarily materialistic after the manner of Pavlovian 'reflexology'. It nevertheless encourages the treatment of men as mass beings with calculable reactions, rather than as persons, each one unique and irreplaceable.

The suppression of culture by technology embitters a certain portion of the intelligentsia and gives them a feeling of isolation. Strict specialisation evokes a longing for a different order, in which the intellectual would become integrated not in the capacity of a wage-earner into a commercial undertaking, but in the capacity of a thinker into a humane collectivity.

In the United States, where no-one conceives of the possibility of a different régime from the existing one, such grievances and longings do not express themselves in active dissidence. In any case, the causes of this comparative alienation are far more accentuated in Russia, where the technician outshines the man of letters even more than in the United States. Writers, artists and propagandists do not refuse the title of engineers of the soul; art for art's sake or pure research are, as such, excommunicated. But it is difficult to imagine that Soviet biologists are not interested in discussing the relative merits of Morgan and Lysenko, Soviet physicists in corresponding freely with their foreign colleagues, Soviet philosophers in questioning the validity of Leninist materialism, and Soviet musicians in committing the crime of formalism if they could do so with impunity.

It does not necessarily follow that the Soviet intellectual is hostile to the régime itself. It may well regard the State control of the economy, and the authority of the Party, as quite natural, just as the American intelligentsia considers private enterprise perfectly normal. If the Soviet painter were no longer constrained to socialist realism and the Soviet novelist to a forced optimism, if the Soviet geneticist were no longer prevented from defending Mendelism, they would probably confess to being perfectly content. The critical novels and plays which the relaxation of 'Zhdanovism' called forth in the year which followed Stalin's death reveal the aspirations of Soviet intellectuals much more truly than the countless motions of writers' committees.

The American intelligentsia does not envy the condition of the Soviet intelligentsia, but the intellectuals of countries which are allergic to American capitalism and fascinated by the proletarian adventure, when they turn their eyes from one to the other of the two 'monsters', are inclined to wonder

which of them is the prefigurement of their future, and which is the more odious.

The French scientist whose laboratory is ill-equipped might well hanker after Americanism just as much as Sovietism. But the American régime, being 'capitalist' like that of France, would not represent a break with the present. And since the Frenchman automatically demands that the State should take charge of the tasks indispensable for the collective, prosperity, the country of his dreams tends to be the one in which the government does in fact spend freely on scientific research. The man of letters, the historian, the novelist or the artist, ought to dread and abhor the despotism of cultural officialdom. But he also detests the tyranny exercised by the tastes of the masses as interpreted by the press, the radio and book publishers. The necessity to sell intellectual merchandise seems no less unbearable than obedience to a State ideology. The man of culture feels himself driven to a choice between prostitution and solitude.

Might not this gloomy alternative be overcome by a régime in which technology was at the service of a philosophy? Over there, the writer shares in a great and noble task, the transformation of nature and of humanity itself; over there, the writer contributes to the success of the five-year plans, producing just as the miner does, directing just as the engineer or the manager does. He has no need to worry about selling his handiwork: the State looks after that. He has no need to depend on publishers since commercial problems do not exist. He does not feel himself a slave since he adheres to the ideology which unites the people, the party and the government. He is protected against isolation, against the difficulties and hardships of earning a living by his pen, the drudgery of a second job, the boredom of hackwork. All that is asked of him in return is just one sacrifice: to say yes to the régime, to say yes to the dogma and its day-to-day interpretations— an inescapable concession which yet carries the germ of a total corruption.

The Western writer, who has prostituted himself to achieve success or who has vegetated in obscurity, imagines from afar the sense of communion with the masses who are forging the future, the security ensured by State editions. The insecurity engendered by the unpredictable currents of the purges can be accepted without too much difficulty as the reverse side of the responsibility to which he aspires. But how would he put up with the necessity for tireless enthusiasm? The heroes of the emancipated proletariat sing the glory of their masters. How long does the sincerity of their allegiance withstand the obligations of public service?

Thirty years ago, Julien Benda immortalised an expression with the title of his book *La Trahison des Clercs.* It was at a time when public opinion had not yet forgotten all the manifestoes signed on both sides of the Rhine by the most celebrated names in literature and philosophy. Over and over again, as Benda recalled, the intellectuals had told the soldiers that they were fighting either for culture or for civilisation, had denounced the barbarism of the enemy without submitting their respective atrocity stories to impartial criticism, had transfigured a rivalry between sovereign powers, similar to so many others which Europe had known in the past, into a holy war. They had given an articulate and would-be rational form to the interests of States and the hatred between peoples. They had betrayed their mission, which is to serve higher, permanent values such as truth and justice.

The conclusions of the argument were none the less confused. Julien Brenda had no difficulty in describing the secularisation of thought—how the majority of the intellectuals had ceased to care for higher things and had come to regard the organisation of the temporal city as the ultimate goal. They taught people to prize earthly goods, national independence, the political rights of the citizen, the raising of living standards. Even the Christians had yielded to the fascination of immanence. But if the betrayal consists in over-valuing the temporal and under-valuing the eternal, the intellectuals of our time are all traitors. Detached from the Church, they have abjured their true function because they aspire co the possession and control of Nature and power over their fellowmen.

Involved, as they are, by their teachings and their professional activities, in historical conflicts, how can the intellectuals escape the contradictions and the constraints of politics? When are they faithful to their mission and when do they betray it? The Dreyfus affair provided Julien Benda with an ideal model. The 'clerks' who defended the innocent man, erroneously condemned, were obeying the law of their estate, even if they damaged the prestige of the General Staff and weakened the Army. The 'clerk' must place respect for the truth above the greatness of his country, but he must not be surprised if the prince judges otherwise.

Not all historical events can be made to conform to the Dreyfus model. When two nations are locked in mortal struggle, when a rising class seeks to take the place of the privileged of yesterday, where do truth and justice lie? Supposing that the immediate responsibility of the central powers for the outbreak of the First World War was greater than that of the Western allies—and doubt was permissible on this point— should the 'clerk', as such, have

pronounced a verdict? The consequences of the victory of either side are just as important as the causes of the outbreak. Why should not the German intellectuals have sincerely believed that the victory of the Reich would ultimately serve the higher interests of humanity?

It is seldom possible to choose between parties, régimes or nations on the basis of values defined in abstract terms. If we exclude the partisans of violence for its own sake, the negators of reason, the apostles of the return to the jungle, every camp embodies certain values, none satisfies all the exigencies of the 'clerk'. The man who promises justice for tomorrow employs the cruellest means to attain this end. The man who refuses to spill human blood easily resigns himself to inequality. The revolutionary becomes the executioner, the conservative lapses into cynicism. At the orders of a State, as the servant of a party or a syndicate, as a scientist or director in the American aircraft industry or the atomic energy commission, can the intellectual avoid the discipline of action? The signing of protests against every crime committed on the surface of the earth is surely, in our day, a ludicrous caricature of 'clerkly' behaviour.

In countries which are protected from unanimity by their weakness and their internal divisions, the intellectuals are just as concerned for the efficacy as for the equity of their resolutions. Should they or should they not, for example, expose the Soviet concentration camps at a time when the 'American occupation' seems to them to be the principal danger? Things are no different on the other side of the barricades: the anti-Communists in their turn sacrifice everything to the necessities of the struggle. The intellectuals are no more capable than ordinary mortals of freeing themselves from the logic of the passions. On the contrary, they are more eager for justification because they are so anxious to play down the instinctual element in themselves. Political justification is always haunted by manicheeism. Once again, where are the traitors?

Here I can only give my own personal answer to the question. The intellectual who sets some store by the just and reasonable organisation of society will not be content to stand on the side-lines, to put his signature at the bottom of every manifesto against every injustice. Although he will endeavour to appeal to the consciences of all parties, he will take his stand in favour of the one which appears to offer humanity the best chance—a historical choice which involves the risk of error which is inseparable from the historical condition. He will not refuse to become involved, and when he

participates in action he will accept its consequences, however harsh. But he must try never to forget the arguments of the adversary, or the uncertainty of the future, or the faults of his own side, or the underlying fraternity of ordinary men everywhere.

The intellectual who is in a responsible position in the Communist Party mobilises the masses, trains them for battle, takes them to school, urges them on to work, teaches them the 'truth'. Thus he is 'clerk', since he preaches the dogma. He has become a warrior while continuing to think and write. The conquering religion allows the intellectual to embody, simultaneously, two diverse types—at least in the initial phase of the crusade. For his success is only temporary, and he will be made to pay dearly for it. The intellectual-militant has given his allegiance to a few men, yesterday the revered leaders, tomorrow the masters of the bureaucracy. A prisoner of the pitiless servitudes of the régime, he is obliged to exalt the leaders of the State, to follow the meanderings of a line sanctified by the future kingdom of God. Worse still, he must repeat the words of the orthodoxy, and finally acclaim the executioners and deny all honour to the vanquished.

No doubt he is aware of the symbolic meaning of the crimes of Trotsky or Bukharin. The philosopher in Paris has the right to distinguish between the crime which is no more than that of opposition, and espionage on behalf of the Gestapo. But the intellectual on the other side of the Iron Curtain, though he may make the distinction, cannot proclaim it openly. He must express himself like the policeman-inquisitor, he must betray his mission in order to remain faithful to the State. Enslaved, by its victory, to a Party/Church, to an ideology petrified into a dogma, the left-wing intelligentsia is doomed either to revolt or self-betrayal.

Will it, in that part of Europe which is still free, continue to feel alienated to the point of welcoming its own enslavement? Deprived of a genuine faith, will it go beyond the prophetism, which is not without nobility, and embrace the secular religion, which is the justification for tyranny?

CONCLUSION

THE END OF THE IDEOLOGICAL AGE?

IT may seem rather paradoxical to envisage the end of the ideological age at a time when Senator McCarthy continues to play a leading role on the Washington stage, when *Les Mandarins* has just won the Prix Goncourt and the flesh-and-blood 'mandarins' are making the pilgrimage to Moscow and Peking. One is not, of course, so naïve as to expect peace to blossom forth in the immediate future: the idealists disillusioned or liquidated, the bureaucrats continue to reign.

The Westerners themselves may dream of political tolerance just as, three centuries ago, they tired of futile slaughter in the name of the same God for the choice of the true religion. But they have communicated to the rest of the world their faith in a radiant future. Nowhere, in Asia or in Africa, has the Welfare State spread enough benefits to stifle the impulse towards irrational and foolish hope. The nations of Europe preceded the others on the road to industrial civilisation. Now, perhaps, moved by the first glimmerings of scepticism, they are beginning to foreshadow, however prematurely, a new shape of things to come.

Let us look back and survey the centuries which have elapsed since the dawn of the philosophy of immanence and of modern science. Every one of the ideologies which, for a few years or for a few decades, has seized the imagination of the crowd or of thinking men, reveals, retrospectively, a simple structure with one or two guiding ideas.

The optimism of the Left was created and maintained by a strong feeling: admiration for the power of reason, certainty that the application of science to industry would revolutionise the order of human society and the condition of its individual members. The ancestral aspiration towards human brotherhood was united with faith in practical science in order to inspire either nationalism or socialism or both.

Freedom of enquiry asserted against Church orthodoxy, and the equality of fighting men established on the field of battle by the introduction of firearms, undermined the edifice of traditional hierarchies. The future would

belong to free and equal citizens. After the storm which precipitated the collapse of the most grandiose edifice of aristocratic Europe, after the fall of the French monarchy, the revolutionary fervour, encouraged by flamboyant successes as well as bloody defeats, split into two separate channels, nationalist and socialist.

Called upon to defend the Fatherland at the risk of their lives, the servants of the throne felt entitled to demand a State which they could call their own and rulers whose language they could understand. Historians, philosophers and novelists, stressing the individuality of ethnic or cultural groups or the right of self-determination, sensitive to the unconscious workings of the centuries or to the coherence of the cities of antiquity, elaborated the various theories of the nation. Perhaps, in justifying national passions, they merely succeeded in exacerbating them, sometimes on the level of primitive tribalism, sometimes ennobled by the dream of liberty. At all events, the sort of reasonable administration accepted by several nationalities because foreign to each of them was in the long run rendered anachronistic by the speed of primary education and conscription.

National sentiments are still strong on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In the people's democracies Russian domination is detested. The French are easily aroused against the American 'occupation'. The European Defence Community was denounced as the supreme surrender because it transferred to a supra-national organism some of the prerogatives of sovereignty. The Communist militant follows the orders which are sent from Moscow; in 1939-40 he sabotaged the war effort, in June 1941 he joined the Resistance, but the Party won recruits by the million during the period when the interests of France coincided with those of the Soviet Union.

National feeling remains and must remain the cement of human collectivities, but the nationalist ideology is none-the-less condemned in Western Europe. An ideology presupposes an apparently systematic formalisation of facts, interpretations, desires and predictions. The intellectual who wants to be *essentially* nationalist must interpret history as the permanent struggle of jungle states or prophesy peace between independent nations on a basis of mutual respect. The combination of revolutionary nationalism and Machiavellian diplomacy advocated by Charles Maurras could not survive the weakening of the European states.

By all means let the rulers defend tooth and nail the interests and rights of their country against the encroachments of strong and tactless allies. But how

can one get excited about the temporal grandeur of a collectivity which is incapable of manufacturing its own arms? The American defence budget represents three-quarters of the total military expenditure of the Atlantic alliance. Isolation, neutrality, and the playing off of one bloc against the other, are sometimes possible and always legitimate, but they do not contribute towards an ideological transfiguration. In our century, a second-class nation-state is not an adequate framework for full human expression.

The United States and the Soviet Union are capable of spreading the pride of domination and the will to conquest. Their nationalism is on a different level from that of the European states tied to one soil, one culture, one language. In Russia, whether Tsarist or Soviet, and in the United States, citizenship is accorded to men of many different races, colours and languages. Colour prejudice in the United States has put a brake on the realisation by the negroes of the equality promised by the American constitution. If they have not responded to the appeal of Communism, it is to a large extent because of this promise. Externally the United States, except for a few years at the end of the last century and the beginning of this, have been innocent of imperialism in the European fashion, or of the desire for expansion and the permanent struggle with other states. American citizenship involves not so much the participation in a culture rooted in history as the acquisition of a way of life.

The Soviet Union has carried on in a new form the Tsarist tradition which allowed the ruling classes of neighbouring peoples entry into the aristocracy of the imperial State. Thanks to the Communist Party, it has maintained the unity of the multi-national élite. Soviet citizenship, offered to innumerable nationalities, requires loyalty to a State and adherence to an ideology, but not the renouncing of the nationality of origin.

The Big Two, as a result of their rivalry and of the power vacuum which grew up between them after the Second World War, have been led to set up supra-national systems one against the other. NATO is dominated by the United States which provides arms for the allied divisions and which alone is powerful enough to form a counter-weight to the Soviet mass. Marshal Rokossovsky is in command in Warsaw because the Soviet leaders are doubtful about the loyalty of the Poles and because several divisions of the Red Army are stationed in the heart of Germany. *Lebensraum,* one of the favourite themes of the pundits of the Third Reich, has been realised on both sides of the Iron Curtain, *but only on the military plane.*

One hesitates to use the word empire. There is not the slightest sign of an Atlantic patriotism and it is scarcely likely that Soviet Russian patriotism is very widespread in the satellite states, outside the Communist minorities. The supranational system, in theory unified by the triumph of a common faith, denies itself by isolating the people's democracies one from the other. It is not much easier to travel from Roumania to Poland than from Poland to France. The people's democracies, deprived of the substance of independence, have been given a sort of travesty of it; they are all shut in between their own frontiers as if each state necessary to the total plan had to be closed, even against its allies.

No less than the domination of men of other races and other languages, extreme inequalities of economic conditions seemed to be in contradiction with the spirit of the new times. The miracles of science made human misery scandalous and inexcusable. Nobody doubted that industry must soon eliminate the relics of immemorial poverty; people differed only on the choice of means. The ideal of the social community oscillated between the notion of a balance achieved by all without having been the object of a conscious will, and the notion of prosperity for all thanks to a global plan and the elimination of the exploiters.

Liberalism and socialism continue to inspire convictions and to provoke controversies, but it is becoming more and more difficult reasonably to transform such preferences into doctrines. Western 'capitalist' society today comprises a multitude of socialist institutions. One can no longer count on collective ownership or planning to bring about a dramatic improvement in man's lot.

Technological progress lived up to men's expectations and has gone on increasing by leaps and bounds. Perhaps, some years or some decades hence, it will have overcome the limitations of material resources. But its price and its limits are now generally realised. Mechanised societies are not pacific; they deliver man from the servitudes of poverty and weakness, but they subject millions of workers to the logic of mass production, and they risk turning human beings into machines.

Neither the optimist who conjures up a vision of fraternity thanks to material plenty, nor the pessimist who visualises a consummate tyranny extended over human minds with the help of the new instruments of mass communication and torture, is quite refuted by the experience of the twentieth century. The dialogue between them, begun at the time of the first

factories, is still being pursued. But it does not take the form of an ideological debate, since the opposing themes are no longer connected with a particular class or party.

The last great ideology was born of the combination of three elements: the vision of a future consistent with human aspirations, the link between this future and a particular social class, and trust in human values above and beyond the victory of the working class, thanks to planning and collective ownership. Confidence in the virtues of a socio-economic technique has begun to wane and one looks in vain for this class which is supposed to bring about the radical renewal of institutions and ideas.

The theory of the class struggle, which is still current today, is falsified by a spurious analogy: the rivalry between bourgeoisie and proletariat differs in essence from the rivalry between aristocracy and bourgeoisie.

Certain nineteenth-century thinkers transfigured into a promethean exploit the overthrow of the French monarchy and the blood-stained, terror-haunted, faction-ridden adventure of the Republic. Hegel claimed to have seen the spirit of the world passing on horseback, in the form of an officer risen from the ranks whom the god of battles had crowned. Marx and then Lenin painted dream-pictures of the Jacobins, the active minority which stirs up the stagnant pool of popular feeling, the missionary order in the service of the socialist revolution. There could be no doubt about it—the proletariat would finish the work begun by the bourgeoisie.

The ideologists of the proletariat are bourgeois intellectuals. The bourgeoisie, whether it derived its ideas from Montesquieu, Voltaire or Jean-Jacques Rousseau, set up its own conception of human existence and the political order in opposition to the *Ancien Régime* and the Catholic vision of the world. *The proletariat has never had a conception of the world opposed to that of the bourgeoisie; there has been an ideology of what the proletariat should be or should do, an ideology whose historical ascendancy was most powerful when the number of industrial workers was smallest.* The so-called proletarian party, in the countries where it has seized power, has had peasants rather than factory workers as its troops, and intellectuals, exasperated by the traditional hierarchy or by national humiliation, as its leaders.

The values to which the working class spontaneously subscribes differ from those of the bourgeoisie. It is not impermissible to construct antitheses between the two: the sense of solidarity against the desire for possessions, participation in the community against individualism or egoism, the

generosity of the penniless against the avarice of the rich, etc. In any case there is no denying the obvious fact that the system and style of living in working-class districts are very different from those of the wealthy middle classes. So-called proletarian régimes, that is régimes governed by Communist parties, owe practically nothing to authentic working-class culture, to the parties or unions whose leaders themselves belong to the working class.

Popular culture in our century has succumbed to the blows of *Pravda, France-Soir* or the *Readers' Digest.* Revolutionary syndicalist or anarchist movements cannot resist the unconscious coalition of employers' organisations which fear them, and socialist, especially communist, parties which detest them. The latter have been affected by the thought and action of the intellectuals.

It was in the hope of accomplishing fully the ambitions of the bourgeoisie —the conquest of Nature, social equality or equality of opportunity—that the ideologists handed on the torch to the proletariat. The contrast between technological progress and the misery of the workers was a crying scandal. How could one help but impute to private ownership and the anarchy of the market the survival of ancestral poverty which was in fact due to the exigencies of accumulation (capitalist or socialist), insufficient productivity and increases in population. Soft-hearted intellectuals, revolted by injustice, seized on the idea that capitalism, being in itself evil, would be destroyed by its contradictions and that its victims would eventually overthrow the privileged. Marx achieved an improbable synthesis between the Hegelian metaphysic of history, the Jacobin interpretation of the Revolution, and the pessimistic theory of the market economy developed by British authors. To maintain the continuity between the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution, it was only necessary to call Marxist ideology proletarian. But one has merely to open one's eyes to be rid of the illusion.

The market economy and total planning are rival models —which no existing economy actually reproduces—not successive stages in evolution. There is no necessary link between the phases of industrial development and the predominance of one model or the other. Backward economies approximate more to the model of the planners than do advanced economies. Mixed systems are not monsters incapable of surviving, or transitional forms on the way to the pure type; they are the normal thing. In a planned system one will find most of the categories of the market economy, more or less

modified. As the standard of living rises and the Soviet consumer has more freedom of choice, the benefits and the problems of Western prosperity will appear on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

The revolutions of the twentieth century have not been proletarian revolutions; they have been thought up and carried out by intellectuals. They have overthrown the traditional power, ill-adapted to the exigencies of the technological age. The prophets imagined that capitalism would precipitate a revolution comparable to the one which convulsed France at the end of the eighteenth century. Nothing of the sort happened. On the contrary, wherever the ruling classes have been unable or unwilling to reform themselves quickly enough, the dissatisfaction of the bourgeoisie, the impatience of the intellectuals and the immemorial aspirations of the peasants have provoked an explosion.

Neither Russia nor the United States ever fully experienced the struggle between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Tsarism sought to borrow the technical civilisation of the West while discarding its democratic ideas. It has been replaced by a power which has re-established the identification between society and the State, the administrators constituting the only privileged class.

The United States became conscious of its identity through the progressive ideas of the European eighteenth century. It sought to put them into practice on virgin soil which had to be conquered not so much in the face of the Indians, who were doomed to extinction by the gap between their tribal culture and that of the European immigrants, as in the face of recalcitrant Nature and the elements. There was no aristocracy, clinging to its privileges, to restrain the impetus of reason and industry. American religion taught moral strictness, not a creed or orthodoxy. It urged the citizens both to intransigence and conformism, but it did not unite with the State to put a brake on the movement of modern thought. No event comparable to the French Revolution and the secession of the proletariat came to belie the eighteenth-century optimism of the New World. The Civil War was interpreted by the historians—the spokesmen of the victors—as a triumph, proving that the world cannot live half free and half enslaved. The American workers accepted the promises of the American Idea and did not believe in the necessity of an Apocalypse.

Armed with a doctrine which condemned their enterprise in advance, the Bolsheviks were the builders of an industrial society of a kind hitherto unknown. The State took over the responsibility for distributing the collective

resources, for managing the factories, for savings and investments. The Western working class in the nineteenth century rose against the employers, not directly against the State. Where the employers and the State are identical, revolt against the one would involve dissidence towards the other. The Marxist ideology offered an admirable justification for the necessities of a State economy: the proletarians owed unconditional obedience to their own collective will embodied in the Party.

Certainly, if criticism had been tolerated, the intellectuals would have denounced the misery of the slums of Leningrad and Moscow in the Russia of 1930, just as their colleagues had denounced those of Manchester or Paris a century earlier. The contrast between the growth of the means of production and the aggravation, apparent or real, of the sufferings of the people would have inspired familiar Utopian visions of progress without tears or of fecund catastrophes.

In any case, what possible programme could the oppositionists offer as an alternative to the Soviet reality? They might demand political liberties, the participation of the workers in the management of industry, but not the individual appropriation of the instruments of production, except perhaps in agriculture. Under a capitalist régime the masses can at least imagine that public ownership would cure or attenuate the evils of industry, but under a collectivist régime they cannot expect the same miracle from a restoration of private ownership. The malcontents dream of a return to Leninism, of a truly proletarian State; in other words they aspire to institutions and a way of life which would be a more faithful expression of the reigning ideology.

In the United States, the proletariat does not think of itself as such. The workers' organisations demand and obtain many of the reforms which in Europe are associated with the Welfare State or socialism; the leaders of the masses are satisfied with the position accorded to them under the present régime, and the masses themselves do not aspire to a different society or different values. Unanimity on 'free enterprise', on competition and the 'circulation of the élites' does not mean that the American reality accords with these ideas, any more than the obligatory teaching of Marxist-Leninism ensures that Russian society conforms to the official ideology.

Thus, by different routes, either spontaneously or with the help of the police, the two great societies of our time have come to suppress the conditions of ideological debate, have integrated the workers, and imposed a unanimous adherence to the principles of the régime. The debate remains a

burning one in those countries of the second rank who are not entirely at home in the ideological camp to which they belong; too proud to accept their *de facto* dependence, too arrogant to admit that the dissidence of the internal proletariat reflects a national failure rather than a decree of history, fascinated by the power which spreads terror, prisoners of the geography which tolerates criticism and abuse but which forbids escape.

By a conspicuous paradox, the diffusion of the same technological civilisation throughout the globe gives a special character to the problems which confront each separate nation today. The political consciousness of our time is falsified by the failure to acknowledge these distinctions.

Whether liberal, socialist, conservative or Marxist, our ideologies are the legacy of a century in which Europe was aware of the plurality of civilisations but did not doubt the universality of its message. Today, factories, parliaments and schools are springing up in every latitude, the masses are in ferment, the intellectuals are taking over power. Europe, which has finished conquering and is already succumbing to its victory and the revolt of its slaves, hesitates to admit that its ideas have conquered the universe but have not kept the form they used to have in our own debates and controversies.

Prisoners of the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, the intellectuals of the East are not allowed to admit the obvious fact that industrial civilisation comprises a multiplicity of forms between which neither history nor reason imposes a radical choice. Those of the West sometimes hesitate before making an avowal in the opposite sense: without freedom of enquiry, individual initiative, the pioneering spirit of the traders and industrialists, this civilisation would perhaps never have arisen; but are the same virtues necessary in order to reproduce or prolong it? Strange century, in which one can travel round the globe in forty-eight hours, but in which the principal protagonists in the drama are compelled, after the fashion of the heroes of Homer, to exchange their insults from afar.

India cannot model herself either on the Europe of today or on that of 1810. Even supposing that the income per head of population and the distribution of labour were, in the India of today, what they were in Europe a century and a half ago, the phases of economic development would not be homologous. India borrows technological recipes instead of inventing them;

she receives the ideas which are accepted in semi-socialist England; she applies the lessons of contemporary medicine and hygiene. The growth of the population and the development of the economy will not be harmonised in the Asia of the twentieth century as they were in the Europe of the nineteenth.

Politics are differentiated not only by the economic and demographic ages of different countries, but also by the traditions peculiar to each nation, each sphere of culture. Everywhere, in the so-called free world, assemblies deliberate side by side with blast furnaces. Everywhere, parliament, the institution which, in the West, was the crowning glory of democracy, has been adopted from the start. In Paris in the last century people legitimately demanded universal suffrage and the sovereignty of parliament; the State had been consolidated by centuries of monarchy, the nation forged by centuries of life in common. An intellectual class, trained in political debate, aspired to exercise power. The Westerners were not wrong to believe that their parliaments— Continental hemicycles or Anglo-Saxon rectangles—were destined for the same triumphal progress across the globe as motor-cars or electricity. They would be wrong to ascribe a universal significance to the ideologies which glorify these institutions.

Political theorists must and can take into consideration the various circumstances—the strength of national unity, the intensity of the quarrels of language, religion or party, the integration or dissolution of local communities, the capacity of the political élite, etc.—which determine in each country the chances of success of the parliamentary system. The preferences expressed by political or economic doctrinaires for one method as against another are reasonable as long as the limits and uncertainties are not forgotten. The free world would be guilty of a fatal error if it thought that it possessed a unique ideology comparable to Marxist-Leninism.

The Stalinist technique, at least in the first phase, remains applicable in every country where the Party, thanks to the Russian army or the national army, has taken possession of the State. A false doctrine manages to inspire effective action because this is determined by tactical considerations based on the experience of half a century.

The falseness of the doctrine is proved by the widespread aversion to this pseudo-liberation. In Europe, outside Russia, Communist régimes have been incapable of installing themselves, and are perhaps incapable of maintaining themselves, without the help of the Red Army. As time goes on, national

peculiarities will reassert themselves within the Soviet universe. The expansion of Communist power does not prove the truth of the doctrine, any more than the conquests of Mohammed proved the truth of Islam.

The Soviet world is not the victim of its errors; it is the West which is the victim. The idea of government by discussion, consent or compromise is perhaps an ideal; the practice of elections and parliamentary assemblies is one practice among others. To try to introduce it without bothering to examine the circumstances is simply to guarantee its failure. And the failure of a democratic practice cannot be camouflaged by the organisation of terror and enthusiasm; it breaks out in broad daylight and leads inevitably to despotism.

No intelligentsia suffers as much as the French from the loss of universality, none clings so obstinately to its illusions, none would gain more from recognising its country's true problems.

France belongs to the non-Communist world and could not change sides without provoking the catastrophe which she is so desperately anxious to avoid. This connection does not forbid any so-called left-wing measure, whether the nationalisation of industries or reforms in North Africa. Geography precludes the adoption of the Soviet technique of government and the participation of Russian representatives in the running of the country as in the satellite States. Almost as if to guarantee their own ineffectiveness, the French intellectuals never cease to recommend the impossible, and to offer to the Communist Party a collaboration which the latter rejects or accepts, according to the circumstances, with unalterable contempt.

Hankering after a truth applicable to humanity as whole, they watch and wait upon events. For some time after Yugoslavia's excommunication by Moscow, Saint-Germain-des-Prés was Titoist. Then Marshal Tito, without abandoning Communism, concluded military alliances analogous to those with which the progressives reproached the Western states, and his prestige immediately sank to zero.

Mao Tse-tung's China has now succeeded Tito's Yugoslavia in their esteem. Vaster and more mysterious than the country of the Balkan David, the oriental colossus will at last achieve the true Communism. As no-one can decipher the characters of its written language, and as visits are limited to a few towns and a few factories, there is not much risk that the enthusiasm of Western travellers might be threatened by contact with the true reality. Those

who might be able to provide information about the other side of the picture —missionaries and counter-revolutionaries—will be conveniently ignored or disbelieved. The victory of Communism in China is probably the most significant fact of the twentieth century; the destruction of the family, the building of a heavy industry and a powerful army and a strong State mark the beginning of a new era in the history of Asia. But what possible model, what lessons can the régime of Mao Tse-tung offer to France?

Many of the tasks which should compel the attention and the energies of France in the middle of the twentieth century would have a significance far transcending our frontiers. To organise a genuine community between Frenchmen and Moslems in North Africa, to unite the nations of Western Europe so that they are less dependent on American power, to cure the technological backwardness of our economy— such tasks as these might well arouse a clear-sighted and practical enthusiasm. None would revolutionise the condition of men on this earth, none would make France the soldier of the ideal, none would rescue us from the tiny foreland of Asia with which our fate is indissolubly linked; none would have the glamour of metaphysical ideas, none the apparent universality of socialist or nationalist ideologies. By placing our country in its exact position in the planetary system, by acting in accordance with the teachings of social science, our intellectuals could achieve the only political universality which is accessible in our time. They might give to mechanical civilisation a form attuned to the traditions and the maturity of the nation, and organise with a view to prosperity and peace the zone of the planet over which our power and our thought can still extend their influence.

To these immediate and attainable prospects, the French intellectuals seem indifferent. One has the feeling that they aspire to recapture, in a philosophy of immanence, the equivalent of the lost eternity, and that they murmur to one another: "What's the point of it all, if it isn't universal?"

The attitude of the French intellectuals is determined by national pride and nostalgia for a universal idea. This attitude has repercussions abroad which are not solely due to the talent of French writers. If the men of culture cease to believe heart and soul in a truth for all men, are they not lapsing into indifference?

An intellectual's religion, Communism recruits disciples among the intellectuals of Asia and Africa, whereas the reasonable democracy of the West, though it often wins free elections, finds scarcely any supporters ready to sacrifice all for the triumph of the cause.

"In offering to China and Japan a secularised version of our Western civilisation, we have been offering them a stone instead of bread, while the Russians, in offering them Communism as well as technology, have been offering them bread of a sort—a gritty, black bread, if you like to call it so; but that is still an edible substance that contains in it some grain of nutriment for the spiritual life without which man cannot live".*

Communism is a degraded version of the Western message. It retains its ambition to conquer nature, to improve the lot of the humble, but it sacrifices what was and must remain the heart and soul of the unending human adventure: freedom of enquiry, freedom of controversy, freedom of criticism, and the vote.

Must it be said that the Communist version succeeds because of its intellectual weakness? No true theory will suppress the uncertainties of the present; it will maintain and encourage controversy, it will offer no hope of speedy progress, it will not liberate the Asian intellectuals from their complexes. The secular religion retains the prestige and the force of the prophetism; it creates a small number of fanatics, and these in their turn mobilise and control the masses, who themselves are not so much seduced by the vision of the future as revolted by the miseries of the present.

The content of the Communist faith differs scarcely at all from the content of the other ideologies to which left-wing intellectuals everywhere adhere. For the most part the latter remain on the threshold, unamenable to the discipline of the sect. The minority who take the final step, overcoming all their doubts and scruples, are possessed by the faith which 'moves mountains'. The liberals are consumed with doubts and uncertainties and sometimes feel vaguely guilty for being on the 'wrong side'—the side of the Right, of Reaction, of Feudalism. The climate of the Western universities has rendered students from all over the world susceptible to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine which is not the logical fulfilment but the dogmatic hardening of the progressivist philosophy.

Communism, it is said, is the first essentially European belief to have succeeded in converting millions of Asians. The first of the new catechumens

were intellectuals. They had not been converted by Christianity, which ran counter to the traditional system of values and customs, whose teachings were belied by the behaviour of the invaders, and which did not accord with scientific thought, the essence of the military superiority of the imperialists. Communism attracts not because it is a Christian heresy but because it seems to be the extreme form, the definitive interpretation, of the rationalist and optimist philosophy. It gives a coherent expression to the political hopes of the West.

* Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West.*

Simple people are susceptible to these hopes, but indifferent to the interpretative scholasticism. In allowing themselves to be mobilised by the Party they do not become true believers in the Church. The peasants do not aspire to collective ownership but to individual ownership. The workers do not visualise in advance the building up of socialism by the *Gleichschaltung* of the trade unions. It is the prophetism which confers on Communism a sort of spiritual substance.

What remains of this when the conquerors of the future have become the planners of the economy? "The deified militarist has been a flagrant scandal. Alexander, as the Tyrrhenian pirate told him to his face in the story as we have it from St. Augustine, would have been called not a god but a gangster if he had done what he did with a couple of accomplices instead of doing it with a whole army. And what about the deified policeman? Augustus, now, has made himself into a policeman by liquidating his fellow-gangsters, and we are grateful to him for that; but, when we are required to register our gratitude by worshipping this reformed gangster as a god, we cannot comply with much conviction or enthusiasm".* What could possibly be our feeling towards Stalin when he liquidates Zinoviev and Bukharin, or towards Malenkov when he liquidates Beria? Does Communism, when it is installed in power, still contain a spiritual substance?

How long will the exaltation of the builders continue to sustain the militants? How long will national grandeur continue to testify to the mandate of the historical powers-that-be? Perhaps China will find in this mandarins' religion a durable peace. Christian Europe will not. The official orthodoxy will decline into a ritual language, or else the only authentic faith, that which no temporal good can satisfy, will revolt against the secular clericalism. Perhaps men can live without adoring a God in spirit and in truth. They will

not live long, after the 'proletarian' victory, in the expectation of a paradise on this earth.

* Arnold Toynbee, *op. cit.,* p. 182.

Is there, then, no alternative to faith in the proletariat but faith in Christ? Can the West offer a spiritual truth in opposiion to Soviet materialism? We must be careful not to compromise religion in the straggles of temporal powers, to attribute to the system we defend virtues which it does not possess.

The liberal democracies do not represent a 'Christian' civilisation. They have developed in societies whose religion was Christian, and they have been inspired to a certain extent by the absolute value which Christianity gives to the individual soul. Neither electoral and parliamentary practices nor the mechanism of the market, as such, are either Christian or contrary to the Christian spirit. Doubtless the free play of initiative, competition between buyers and sellers, would be unthinkable if human nature had not been sullied by the Fall. The individual would give of his best in the interests of others without hope of recompense, without concern for his own interests. Man being what he is, the Church, which cannot approve unbridled competition or the unlimited desire for wealth, is not obliged to condemn the economic institutions which are characteristic of industrial civilisation. The planners, too, are compelled to appeal to the appetite for money or personal glory. No regime can afford to ignore human egotism.

Communism comes into conflict with Christianity because it is atheist and totalitarian, not because it controls the economy. It arrogates to itself the sole right to educate the young. The Communist State allows religious rites to be celebrated and the sacraments to be administered; but it does not consider itself neutral, it calls religious beliefs superstitions, doomed to disappear with the progress of socialist construction. It enrols the hierarchy in political crusades; 'popes', priests, bishops and Metropolitans are invited to lead the campaign in favour of peace, to denounce the conspiracies of the Vatican.

It is not for those of us who belong to no Church to recommend a choice to the believers, but it behoves us all, incorrigible liberals who tomorrow would return again to the struggle against clericalism, to fight today against this totalitarianism from which professing Christians happen to suffer as much as free-thinking scientists and artists. The tyranny we denounce is not solely directed against a faith we do not share; it is one which affects us all. The State which imposes an orthodox interpretation of day-to-day events also

imposes on us an interpretation of global development and ultimately of the meaning of human existence. It seeks to subordinate all the achievements of the mind, all the activities of autonomous individuals and groups, to its pseudo-truth. In defending the freedom of religious teaching, the unbeliever defends his own freedom.

What essentially distinguishes the West from the Soviet universe is the fact that the one admits itself to be divided and the other 'politicises' the whole of existence. The least important aspect of plurality, although it is more readily cited than any other, is the party system. This is not without its disadvantages; it maintains an atmosphere of division and discord in the body politic, it blurs the sense of communal responsibilities and jeopardises internal peace and friendship. It is tolerated, in spite of everything, as a means of limiting arbitrary power and ensuring a legal expression to discontent, and as a symbol of the lay impartiality of the State and the autonomy of the human mind.

The Westerners, especially the intellectuals, suffer from the fragmentation of their universe. Diffusion and obscurity in poetry, and abstraction in painting, isolate poets and artists from the big public which they affect to despise but which, in their heart of hearts, they long to serve. Physicists or mathematicians can extract energy from the atom but cannot extract-freedom of movement, opinion and friendship from suspicious politicians, from a sensation-hungry Press, from anti-intellectualist demagogues or the secret police. Masters of nuclear fission but slaves of 'security', the scientists, enclosed in their narrow community, feel that they lose all control over their discoveries as soon as they transmit their secrets to the generals and the politicians. The specialist has control over but a limited field of knowledge; present-day science seems to leave him as ignorant of the answers to the ultimate questions as a child awakening to consciousness. The astronomer can foretell an eclipse of the sun with faultless precision; neither the economist nor the sociologist knows whether humanity is progressing towards an atomic holocaust or Utopian peace.

That is where ideology comes in—the longing for a purpose, for communion with the people, for something controlled by an idea and a will. The feeling of belonging to the elect, the security provided by a closed system in which the whole of history as well as one's own person find their place and their meaning, the pride in joining the past to the future in present action—all this inspires and sustains the true believer, the man who is not repelled by

the scholasticism, who is not disillusioned by the twists in the party line, the man who lives entirely for the cause and no longer recognises the humanity of his fellow-creatures outside the party.

Such fanaticism is not for us. We can admire the sombre grandeur of these armies of believers. We can admire their devotion, their discipline and self-sacrifice: such warrior virtues are of the kind that lead to victory. But what will remain tomorrow of the motives that led them to fight? Without a scintilla of doubt or guilt or regret, we can leave the fanatics their inevitable superiority.

Does the rejection of fanaticism encourage a reasonable faith, or merely scepticism?

One does not cease to love God when one gives up converting the pagans or the Jews and no longer reiterates: "No salvation outside the Church". Will one cease to desire a less unjust society and a less cruel lot for humanity as a whole if one refuses to subscribe to a single class, a single technique of action and a single ideological system?

True, the comparison is not unreservedly valid. Religious experience gains in authenticity as one comes to distinguish better between moral virtue and obedience to the Church. The secular religions dissolve into politico-economic opinions as soon as one abandons the dogma. Yet the man who no longer expects miraculous changes either from a revolution or an economic plan is not obliged to resign himself to the unjustifiable. It is because he likes individual human beings, participates in living communities, and respects the truth, that he refuses to surrender his soul to an abstract ideal of humanity, a tyrannical party, and an absurd scholasticism.

Perhaps it will be otherwise. Perhaps the intellectual will lose interest in politics as soon as he discovers its limitations. Let us accept joyfully this uncertain promise. Indifference will not harm us. Men, unfortunately, have not yet reached the point where they have no further occasion or motive for killing one another. If tolerance is born of doubt, let us teach everyone to doubt all the models and Utopias, to challenge all the prophets of redemption and the heralds of catastrophe.

If they alone can abolish fanaticism, let us pray for the advent of the sceptics.

APPENDIX

FANATICISM, PRUDENCE, AND FAITH*

When one reviews the political attitudes of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty since 1945 one has the impression of having witnessed a kind of ballet or square dance. The "new left" of the Merleau-Ponty of 1955 resembles the *Rassemblement démocratique révolutionnaire* of the Jean-Paul Sartre of 1948. The Marxist *attentisme* of Merleau-Ponty was closer to the present pro-Communism of Sartre than to the a-Communism expounded in *Les Adventures de la dialectique.*

Since they are professional philosophers, each justifies his current opinions by arguments which, if they were valid, would hold true for centuries. They are all the more inclined to elevate the episodes of their existence to the level of eternity because they are obsessed by the examples of Marx and Lenin. But existentialism, whether that of Sartre or that of Merleau-Ponty, is not an *essentially* historical philosophy.

From Existentialism to Doctrinairism

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, in their pre-political work, belong to the tradition of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and the revolt against Hegelianism. The individual and his destiny constitute the central theme of their reflection. They disregard that totality whose recognition by the philosopher marks the beginning of wisdom. Unfinished history imposes no truth. Man's freedom is the capacity of self-creation, although one cannot make out, at least in *L'Être et le néant,* what law this creation should obey or toward what objective it should tend.

*This essay originally appeared in French in *Preuves* in February 1956 and in *Marxismes Imaginaires: D'une sainte famille à l'autre* (Paris: Gallimard/Folio, 1970 and 1998). It is Aron's best defense and articulation of political judgment as well as his fullest response to the critics of *The Opium of the Intellectuals.* The present translation is a significantly revised

version of the one that appeared in *Marxism and the Existentialists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970).

Every man must find the answer to the situation without deducing it from books or receiving it from others, and yet this answer imposes itself on the solitary and responsible actor. Authenticity—in other words, the courage to take responsibility for oneself, one's heritage, and one's talents—and reciprocity— the recognition of the other, the desire to respect him and to help him fulfill himself—these seem to be the two cardinal virtues of *homo existentialis.*

The existentialists describe human existence as it is lived, without this description referring to a historical particularity. To be sure, this description arises from experience and is related to the latter as the work is related to the artist, but its validity is not limited to one time. Whether it is a question of freedom or of authenticity, it remains true for all men throughout the ages that consciousness is fulfilled by liberating itself and is liberated by becoming responsible for itself.

De Waehlens dismisses as a "bad joke" the objection of Karl Lowith, who quotes a student's remark, "I am resolved to do something, only I don't know what." He writes, "Philosophy, existential or otherwise, would destroy itself if, instead of teaching us to think, it pretended to provide everyone with formulas which, on every occasion, could resolve the problems of his life. The *Sein-Zum-Tode,* whatever else we may think of it, can only be an inspiration, a light by which everyone confronted by his situation has the duty and the privilege of deciding freely, without ceasing to run the risk of being wrong or even of being unfaithful."[1] The objection strikes me as little more than a bad joke. No philosophy can ever provide "formulas" for solving the problems raised by circumstances. But a philosophy which refers to an ideal of virtue or wisdom, to the categorical imperative or to the good will, offers "an inspiration, a light" which are different from those offered by a philosophy which places the accent on freedom, choice, invention. If the philosopher does not know the meaning of virtue and enjoins his disciples to be themselves, is it so wrong of them to conclude that the act of resolution is more important than its content?

Having ruled out a moral law which would govern intention, resolved to ignore those virtues or that inner improvement which the Greeks or the Christians proposed as an ideal, the existentialists propose that each individual win his salvation according to his own law, and they avoid anarchy

only by the idea of a community in which individuals would recognize each other reciprocally in their humanity.

The idea of the authentic community in a philosophy which puts the accent on the individual's creation of values and even of his own destiny seems to be an appeal to harmony against the reality of the clash of individuals, a dream of universality in a phenomenology of particular fatalities. In any case, this altogether formal idea is an idea of Reason (to use the Kantian vocabulary); it is not and cannot be the object of a singular will or the imminent end of the historical movement.

On the basis of this philosophy, should philosophers be favorable to a democracy in the Western style or a democracy in the Soviet style? In any case, they should not attribute an absolute value to either. Neither one wholly achieves the reciprocal recognition of individuals. As for which of the two comes closest to this ideal or deviates from it the least, this is a political or historical question which neither *L'Être et le néant* nor *La Phénoménologie de perception* helps to answer. When it is a question of the status of ownership, the functioning of the economy, or the single or the multiple party system, sociological description is more instructive than transcendental phenomenology.

The Marxism of the two philosophers is partly accidental in origin. Both men, living west of the Iron Curtain, have found themselves hostile to bourgeois democracy and incapable of espousing orthodox Communism. But this political preference would not have found expression in philosophical writings if the temptation of Marxism had not influenced the heirs of Kierkegaard, if the existentialists, having begun with transcendental consciousness, fear and trembling, had not felt the need to reintegrate into a nonsystematic philosophy the fragments of the Hegelian-Marxist historical totality.

In Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History,* at the end of the chapter on Burke, the author writes:

> Political theory became understanding of what practice has produced or of the actual and ceased to be the quest for what ought to be; political theory ceased to be "theoretically practical" (i.e., deliberative at a second remove) and became purely theoretical in the way in which metaphysics (and physics) were traditionally understood to be purely theoretical. There came into being a new

> type of theory, of metaphysics, having as its highest theme human action and its product rather than the whole, which is in no way the object of human action. Within the whole and the metaphysic that is oriented upon it, human action occupies a high but subordinate place. When metaphysics came, as it now did, to regard human action and its product as the end toward which all other beings or processes are directed, metaphysics became philosophy of history. Philosophy of history was primarily theory, i.e., contemplation, of human practice and therewith necessarily of completed human practice; it presupposed that significant human action, History, was completed. By becoming the highest theme of philosophy, practice ceased to be practice proper, i.e., concern with *agenda.* The revolts against Hegelianism on the part of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, insofar as they now exercise a strong influence on public opinion, thus appear as attempts to recover the possibility of practice, i.e., of a human life which has a significant and undetermined future. But these attempts increased the confusion, since they destroyed, as far as in them lay, the very possibility of theory. "Doctrinairism" and "existentialism" appear to us as the two faulty extremes.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty combine in a curious way the two attitudes which Leo Strauss calls the "extremes." In the manner of the doctrinaires, Merleau-Ponty (in 1948) and Jean-Paul Sartre (today) lean toward the unique truth of the classless society. They glorify revolution in the manner of the theoreticians denounced by Burke because they seem to ignore the historical diversities, the slow creations, the unforeseeable accidents, the innumerable variations on the same themes. But at the same time they belong among the descendants of Kierkegaard rather than those of Hegel since they regard individual consciousness as the primary reality, the origin of all philosophy, and since the historical totality—the total and complete human practice—seems incompatible with their mode of thought. In certain respects Marx and Nietzsche are "opposite extremes": but by many paths their descendants come together.

Marx had reinstated the concern for *agenda,* that is, a "significant future," without renouncing the advantages provided by "completed human practice." All he had to do was assert both that the future is unforeseeable, since the negating action is the essence of humanity, and that the proletarian revolution will make a fundamental break in the course of human events. Nobody

knows what the Communist society will be like, but we do know that the advent of the proletariat to the rank of ruling class will be tantamount to the end of pre-history. Thus Marx takes his position both before and after "human practice" is complete.

He is still following Hegel when he regards "human action and its product as the end toward which all other beings or processes are directed." Not that he holds human history to be the end toward which the cosmos tends or Communism to be the conclusion toward which previous societies aspired. Marx, especially in the second part of his life, claimed to perceive a strict determinism; but if one refers to Engels' dialectic of nature, it clearly appears that the levels of reality are arranged according to a qualitative hierarchy. Similarly, the moments of history are oriented toward the fulfillment of human nature and the humanization of society, although this result has not been willed by a mind, individual or collective, and has not aroused in the consciences of men a desire which has finally been satisfied.

The idea that history is creative of truth, although it has not been conceived previously by anybody, does not constitute the originality of Marx's philosophy. The idea that the collective good may be the necessary albeit unintentional result of non-virtuous conduct is common to the majority of modern political and economic thinkers. It is essential to the philosophy of Machiavelli; it is the foundation of political economy. Classical liberals adopt it with no less conviction than Marxists. Both groups are a prey to "doctrinairisms," in spite of their fundamental opposition.

Indeed, both groups have revealed a mechanism of human behavior which should lead infallibly to prosperity and peace. The mechanism described by the liberals is that of prices: indeed, some of them do not hesitate to predict imminent servitude if state interventions jeopardize the functioning of this mechanism. This same mechanism of individual ownership and competition leads infallibly, according to Marx, to its own paralysis. Suffice it to add that the inevitable movement from one regime to another obeys a determinism comparable to that of equilibrium (according to the classical liberals) or that of progressive paralysis (according to the Marxists), and culminates in the dialectic of the self-destruction of capitalism.

Knowledge of the laws governing the functioning and transformation of capitalism permits Marxism to claim both the privileges of history already made and the obligations of history to be made. The future for a Marxist is significant in that it will bring the solution to the conflicts, and it is partially

undetermined in that the moment and modalities of fulfillment are not foreseeable and are not, perhaps, rigorously determined.

Because of its ambiguity, this philosophy lends itself to many interpretations, some of which are not unacceptable to existentialists. The latter have no theory in the sense of a contemplative metaphysic embracing the whole of the cosmos and of humanity but, at least in the French school, they come close to the Marxists in their anthropological conceptions. They detest contemplative thought and the inner life, they see man essentially as the creature who works, who transforms his milieu and domesticates natural forces. Why would they not accept the Marxist vision of a historical development governed by an increase in the forces of production and culminating in the mastery of man over nature?

The Marxists and the existentialists come into conflict at the point where the tradition of Kierkegaard cannot be reconciled with that of Hegel: no social or economic regime can ever solve the enigma of history; individual destiny transcends collective life.[2] Individual consciousness always remains alone in the face of the mystery of life and death, however well organized may be the communal exploitation of the planet. The ultimate meaning of the human adventure is not given by the classless society, even if this society is inevitable.

The existentialists came to Marxism by way of the youthful writings of Marx. They adopted the dialectic of alienation and the reconquest of the self; the proletariat, totally alienated, realized a true intersubjectivity for this very reason. But at the same time they unwittingly fell prey to "doctrinairism": they referred particular societies to a universal model and, in a double arbitrary decree, they condemned certain societies and glorified others on the pretext that the latter represented the model, elevated to a supra-historical truth.

Marxism is by its very nature susceptible to doctrinairism. In calling the future revolution the end of prehistory, Marx confers on an action charged with the uncertainties peculiar to the human condition in a state of becoming, the dignity of a theoretical truth, the kind of truth that offers itself to the all-embracing view of the philosopher who contemplates cosmos and history at the end. In attributing to a particular class the function of abolishing the division into classes, he justifies the transfiguration of one group of men into the agents of the common salvation. The contradictions are inseparable from capitalism; only by violence can they be resolved. Thus we arrive at a strange

philosophy in which peace will result from war pushed to its conclusion and the aggravation of the class struggle serves as a preface to the reconciliation or even the obliteration of classes.

This is not all. Marx's thinking was characterized by a radical error: the error of attributing all alienations to a single origin and of assuming that the end of economic alienation would result in the end of all alienation. In his *On the Jewish Question,* Marx justly contrasted the freedom and equality the citizen enjoys in the political empyrean with the enslavement he suffers in bourgeois society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), that is, in his professional activity. That the formal rights of the citizen are illusory for a proletarian trapped by a starvation wage is a profound truth. But this profound truth is transformed into a fatal illusion if one assumes that the liberation of labor implies political freedom and is identified with a certain status of ownership.

What curbed the potentialities of doctrinairism inherent in Marxism was the determinism of history as asserted by the thinkers of the Second International. As long as one allowed a correspondence between the development of the productive forces, the state of the relations of production, and the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, action was still consistent with nonarbitrary circumstances, a predetermined development. An underdeveloped country could not arrive at socialism; socialism without democracy was not socialism.

French existentialists have not adopted this "objective determinism" of history. For this reason they have amplified the *doctrinairism* and multiplied those confusions between universal and particular to which all theoreticians are inclined and which are the major sin of political thought.

By doctrinairism I mean the attribution of universal value to a particular doctrine. Doctrinairism today is characterized by two modalities. In the first, the principles of the ideal order are identified with certain institutions. For example, one decrees that the democratic principle—governors are legitimate only if voluntarily accepted by the governed—is identical with free elections according to the British or French procedures, and instead of studying *hic et nunc* whether or in what form you can introduce elections in the Gold Coast or New Guinea, you dogmatically require that the electoral or parliamentary customs of a country be reproduced everywhere without regard for circumstances of time or place.

This type of doctrinairism involves two errors: the democratic principle of consent is exalted to the single principle of political order, and the

institutional expression in *one* civilization—the electoral and parliamentary institutions of the West— is mistaken for the principle itself and receives a validity equal to this principle.

The second modality of doctrinairism is the historicist modality. The ideal order of the city depends less on the reason or will of men than on the necessary development of history. The movement of ideas and events will spontaneously realize the human community. Now, the philosopher can assert this providential character of history only if he knows or divines the distinguishing traits of the regime which will constitute its end. But how is one to know that the next phase of history will be its end if it is only in retrospect that one becomes aware of historical truth? Or again, by what right can one predict the imminent completion of history if by definition the future is unforeseeable? This contradiction is mitigated, if not eliminated, in the philosophy of Hegel because of the circularity of the system: the fact that the end refers back to the beginning and that at the end the contradictions that have set the system in motion are resolved gives sense, if not substantiation, to the completion of history.

A vulgarization of Hegelian themes aggravates the doctrinairism implicit in this way of thinking. If the end of history is identified with the universal and homogeneous state, there is a risk that the result will be the negation of particularities, of the rights of collectivities. The economic and political regime, arbitrarily likened to the universal and homogeneous state, is invested with a universal dignity. The wisdom of Montesquieu—the same laws are not good everywhere—disappears, because the historical contingency is subordinated to the alleged logic of evolution. Such a philosophy of history, which I propose to call *historicist doctrinairism,* seems to contradict itself. Insofar as it is historicist, it takes account of the diversity of customs, political regimes, and values; it denies that one can determine a political truth a priori or relate customs to a norm that is valid for all times and all places. But at the same time it assumes that the historical contingency obeys a rational law and automatically arrives at the solution to the problems that confront humanity.

The Western democracies tend toward a moralistic doctrinairism which is limited to politics. Governments are worthy to the degree that they illustrate or approximate the only regime that corresponds to the ideal, democracy (free elections and representative institutions), a doctrinairism which usually is not so much explicitly stated as vaguely felt and which is accompanied by the explicit rejection of any hierarchy of values between the way of life of the

Hottentots and the Pygmies and that of the Americans or French of today. Soviet doctrinairism is historicist: it is the historical dialectic which will bring about the ideal regime, elevated to universal acceptance.

Both forms of doctrinairism implicitly retain a philosophy of progress: At a certain moment in history man has been capable of grasping the truth for himself and of mastering natural forces. Moralism does not rigorously fix the stages of this discovery and this mastery, whereas historicism specifies their order even if it is sometimes forced to skip one stage or add another. Moralism does not seek the conditions indispensable to this absolute, always possible moment. Historicism, in theory, makes the beneficent rupture depend upon circumstances, but in practice both doctrinairisms are inspired by the same confidence in the power of the human will and the unlimited resources of technology.

The doctrinairism of the existentialists is particularly revealing. It presents, exaggerated to the point of caricature, the intellectual errors which paralyze political thought. The existentialists begin with an almost nihilistic denial of all human or social constancy, only to end with a dogmatic affirmation of "a single truth" in an area where the truth cannot be single. The critique of dogmatism is at the same time a critique of nihilism. At least, such was the objective of *The Opium of the Intellectuals,* although people chose so see it as only a testimony to skepticism.

Economic Progress and Political Constancy

Many critics, even some of those who were sympathetic to the book, criticized *The Opium of the Intellectuals* for being negative, for abounding in refutations without providing anything constructive. I earned this reproach by writing the last sentence— "If they alone can abolish fanaticism, let us pray for the advent of the skeptics"—although the whole of the last page means exactly the opposite of what hurried readers found there. As a matter of fact, I expressed the fear, not the hope, that the loss of so-called absolute truths might incline intellectuals toward skepticism: 'Yet the man who no longer expects miraculous changes either from a revolution or from an economic plan is not obliged to resign himself to the unjustifiable. It is because he likes individual human beings, participates in living communities, and respects the truth, that he refuses to surrender his soul to an abstract ideal of humanity, a tyrannical party, and an absurd scholasticism."

Many of the writings that are termed "constructive" are just as futile as plans for a universal state or a new organization of business. The term "constructive" is applied even to projects that are unrealizable, and the term "negative" to analyses which tend to delimit what is possible and to form political judgment— a judgment which is essentially historical in nature and which must focus on the real or set itself an attainable objective. One is sometimes tempted to invert the hierarchy of values and to take the term "negative" as a compliment.

The only criticism that would deserve to be classified as negative would be one which, while dispelling illusions, did not help to discover or judge the present or permanent reality.

Before 1917, no Marxist[3] believed a socialist revolution to be possible in a country where the industrial proletariat numbered only three million workers and represented only a paltry minority. Of course it is always possible to reconcile an interpretation with reality by introducing a supplementary hypothesis: Russia, because economic development had been retarded there, constituted the weakest link in the capitalist chain; the industry there was concentrated, largely financed by foreign capital, and for this reason it aroused greater rebelliousness in the masses than the national industry of the countries of western Europe, although it had arrived at a later phase.

All these hypotheses do not explain away certain major facts which we would not need to recall if certain left-wing intellectuals did not go out of their way to forget them: The revolutions which call themselves Marxist have succeeded only in countries where the development typical of capitalism has not occurred; the strength of the Communist parties in the West is in inverse ratio to the development of capitalism; it is not the capitalist dynamism which swells the ranks of the revolutionary parties in France or Italy, but the paralysis of this dynamism.

From these major facts two conclusions may immediately be drawn. The first of these, which is theoretical, involves one of the classic versions of historical materialism, which is found in the Introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.* It is manifestly false that humanity sets itself only problems that it is capable of solving, false that the relations of production correspond to the development of the forces of production, false that the state of ownership corresponds to the state of the forces of production, false that the movement of the economy is autonomous or obeys a determinism of its own. The rise of the Bolshevik party preceded the

expansion of the proletariat and of capitalism, due to exceptional circumstances (war, difficulties of food control, the collapse of the traditional regime). Lenin and the Bolsheviks were able to seize power and so prove that the form of the state and the conceptions of the governors could determine, as well as reflect, the economic organization.

The second conclusion, which is historical, is that there is no parallelism or correspondence between the development of the forces of production and the shift from capitalism to socialism. One cannot dogmatically decree that a country with a so-called capitalist regime (individual ownership of the means of production, mechanisms of the market) will not someday arrive at a so-called socialist regime (collective ownership, curtailment or elimination of the mechanisms of the market). In this sense a non-Stalinist Marxist could say that General Motors is no longer an example of individual ownership since the shares are divided among hundreds of thousands of persons. One would need only subordinate the board of directors to the state or to a mixed committee of shareholders, workers, and employees to arrive at a state which certain Marxists would not hesitate to call socialist. Similar observations might be made in regard to the mechanisms of the market, whose sphere of influence is shrinking, and the planned economy, which is gradually gaining.

However valid these conclusions may be in the long run, if by socialism one means the Soviet regime and by capitalism the regime of the Western countries, the present rivalry between socialism and capitalism has nothing in common with the struggle between the future and the past, between two stages in the development of industrial society. For the moment we are witnessing a rivalry between two methods of industrialization, and there is no reason why the most effective way of running the American economy must necessarily be the best way of initiating or accelerating industrialization in India or China.

In other words, there is a Marxist critique of the Stalinist interpretation of the world situation. If one refers to the phases of economic growth, a planned economy of the Soviet type is a crude technique for catching up with more advanced countries at the price of imposing sacrifices on populations even more severe than those imposed by industrialization in western Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century.

A Marxist critique of this kind which adopted the primacy of the forces of production would arrange the various economic regimes in an order which would culminate in the regime of the Western type, and in which the

liberalism of nineteenth-century Europe and the sovietism of the twentieth century would be two modalities of an outmoded stage. Even if one does not subscribe to this critique, the fact remains that one cannot discuss a socialism which has built an enormous industry by reducing the standard of living of the masses and a capitalism which has raised the standard of living, reduced working hours, and permitted the consolidation of labor unions, as if these were the same realities that Marx considered a century ago or that he anticipated according to a system which has since been refuted by events.

We must therefore distinguish the choice between socialism and capitalism from the choice between sovietism and a society of the Western type, and raise separately the question of reforms to be introduced to Western societies characterized by rapid expansion (United States), societies characterized by slower expansion (France), and the various underdeveloped societies. To force the Chinese, Russian, North Korean, and Czech regimes into the same category of socialism, and the French, American, Egyptian, and Indian regimes into the same category of capitalism, is to be sure of understanding nothing and confusing everything. Reference to the theory of economic growth and the phases of growth at least enable one to avoid an error which some of us, whom no one will call reactionary, have been denouncing for ten years and which Merleau-Ponty condemns today: the error of defining the Soviet Union by public enterprise and the United States by free enterprise.

In criticizing this historical error we thereby eliminate the philosophical error which consisted in attributing a supra-historic value to the Marxist dialectic of alienation, as identified with the capitalism-socialism dialectic. Not that there is not a supra-historical truth in the dialectic of alienation. Man creates institutions and loses himself in his creations. The challenging of institutions by man, who feels a stranger to himself in his own existence, is the source of the historical movement. The origin of doctrinairism is the implicit or explicit assumption that economic alienation is the primary cause of all alienations and that individual ownership of the means of production the primary cause of all economic alienation. Once this monism has been eliminated one can proceed to a reasonable comparison of the economic, social, and political advantages and disadvantages of the various regimes in themselves and according to the phases of growth.

The two economic values most commonly invoked in our time are increase of the gross national product and equalitarian distribution of income. It is not certain that a concern for increase inspires the same measures as a concern for equality. Nor has it been proved that industrial societies are capable of the

same measure of equalization of income at various phases of their development. It is possible that the broadening of the salary range is favorable to productivity. Generally speaking one can say that the two objectives—wealth and egalitarian justice—are not contradictory, since the facts suggest a reduction of inequalities with an increase of wealth. But at a given moment these two points of reference may compel one not to a radical choice, but to an ambiguous compromise.

However, the two criteria which we have just indicated are not the only ones. Limitation of the powers vested in the administrators of collective labor seems consistent with a fundamental requirement of a political nature. But the rigor of discipline and the authority of the leaders may be favorable to productivity. A comparison of the yield from private ownership and collective ownership, from public ownership where an absolute power reigns and democratized public ownership, may reveal contradictions between efficiency and a human ideal.

This way of raising the problems is imposed by a double critique: a sociological critique of a causal monism in which a *single* element (regime of ownership, a procedure for the establishment of equilibrium) determines the principle traits of an economic regime, and a philosophical critique of the use to which the existentialists have put the dialectic of alienation, a dialectic which acquires concrete value in the sociological translation which Marx gave it but which without this translation remains formal and applicable to all regimes.

This plurality of considerations does not prevent one from grasping wholes, from comprehending a political and economic regime such as the Soviet regime or the American regime in its unity or essence. This procedure, however precarious, is scientifically legitimate and politically inevitable. It must be prefaced by an analysis which has revealed the traits common to all regimes and the advantages or disadvantages peculiar to each.

Every modern economic regime is characterized by factory workers, and the proportion of skilled workers to non-skilled workers depends more on technology than on the state of ownership. The factory workers will be embedded in a collective organization of administration and labor without being capable of grasping fully the meaning of the tasks that are entrusted to them. The condition of the workers nevertheless varies greatly according to size of salaries, breadth of salary range, relations within the factory or business, relations between labor unions and leaders, private or public, and

according to their sense of participation or alienation, a sense that is partially determined by the ideology to which the workers subscribe and the idea they have of the society. To declare flatly that a worker in a capitalist factory in France or the United States is by definition exploited and that a worker in a Soviet factory is not, is not an example of synthetic thought, it is pure nonsense. It is merely a convenient way of substituting verbal gymnastics for a painstaking investigation of reality.

From Criticism to Reasonable Action

Politics is action: political theory is either the comprehension of action crystallized in events or the determination of what action is possible or advisable in a given situation. Since to my way of thinking completed action has not obeyed laws or a dialectic, I cannot offer the equivalent of the Marxist doctrine in which past and future, knowledge and practice are united in a single system. Since the present situation of the world, considered in the context of an economic interpretation, gives rise to different problems in underdeveloped countries, Western countries of retarded growth, and Western countries of accelerated growth,[4] the true doctrine can only be one which shows the diversity of solutions.

To be sure, I have not explicitly indicated either the objectives to be aimed at or the hierarchy to be established among the objectives—I have deliberately refrained from discussing objectives—but these, in fact, are imperatively suggested by modern civilization. They are the objectives of the left, henceforth victorious—a left which runs the risk of being defeated by its own victory. I have not challenged the values of the left; one need only define clearly *all* of these values to reveal their possible contradiction and consequently the partial truth of the men and doctrines of the right.

The major fact of our age is neither socialism, nor capitalism, nor the intervention of the state, nor free enterprise: it is the monstrous development of technology and industry, of which the massive concentrations of workers in Detroit, Billancourt, Moscow, and Coventry are the consequence and symbol. Industrial society is the genus of which Soviet and Western societies are the species.

No nation and no party rejects or can consciously reject industrial civilization, which is the foundation not only of the living standard of the masses, but of military strength. It is conceivable that the ruling classes of certain Islamic or Asiatic countries would tolerate the poverty of their

populations (even with Western technology, they cannot be sure of remedying this poverty if the birth rate remains too high); they would not tolerate a position of subservience to which they would be condemned by the absence of industry. In the native land of Gandhi the rulers are impressed by the Soviet example, which is an example of power much more than an example of abundance.

The imperative of economic progress forces right-wing thinkers to accept the instability of the conditions of existence from one generation to another.[5] This same imperative obliges left-wing thinkers to consider the compatibility or incompatibility of their various ends.

It has been established that the standard of living of the workers depends more on the productivity of work than on the form of ownership of businesses, that the distribution of income is not necessarily less equitable under a regime of private ownership and competition than under a regime of planned economy. If the two major objectives of the left in the economic realm are growth and fair distribution, experimental proof exists to the effect that public ownership and planned economy are not necessary means. Socialist doctrinairism is born of a devotion to anachronistic ideologies. The critique of myths leads directly not to a choice, but to a reasonable consideration of the regimes in which nations have to live.

But why should I have brought up the matter of choice? Neither the Americans nor the British nor the French nor the Soviets have to choose from among different regimes. The Americans and the British are satisfied with their regime and will modify it in accordance with events. If a crisis should arise they will not hesitate to intervene, even if it becomes necessary to move, without admitting it or while insisting on the contrary, toward a kind of planned economy. One need only show that the economic objectives of the left may be attained within the context of the Western regimes to dispel the prestige of the revolutionary mythology and encourage men to use reason to solve problems which are more technological than ideological.

The case of France is unusual. It would seem that the French economy suffers from an insufficiency of dynamism. Her geographical situation and the sentiments of the people rule out the imitation or importation of the Soviet regime, not to speak of the repugnance that would be felt by the vast majority of Frenchmen (including most of those who vote for the Communist Party) for Soviet methods as soon as they had any direct experience of them. So

criticism, by dispelling nostalgia for the beneficial upheaval, clears the way for the effort of construction.

There is not so much difference, in France, between a so-called leftist economist, like Mr. Sauvy and a so-called rightist economist like myself. To be sure, Mr. Sauvy sometimes suggests that the "feudal" powers are the principal persons responsible for stagnation. He is not unaware that resistance to change comes from the small at least as much as from the great and that workers' unions or unions of civil servants or agricultural producers are just as given to Malthusianism as employers' unions. He sometimes promotes the legend of an expansionist left against a Malthusian right, although he has shown better than anyone to what a degree the government of the Popular Front of 1936 had been Malthusian out of ignorance.

To me loyalty to one party has never been a decision of fundamental importance. To join the Communist Party is to accept a theory of the world and of history. To join the Socialist Party or the MRP (*Mouvement républicain populaire*) is to demonstrate one's loyalty to or at least sympathy for a representation of society, a spiritual family. I do not believe in the validity of a system comparable to that of that of the Communists; I feel detached from the preferences or *Weltanschauung* of the left or the right, the socialists or radicals, the MRP or the independents. According to the circumstances I am in agreement or disagreement with the action of a given movement or a given party. In 1941 or 19421 disapproved of the passion with which the Gaullists, from the outside, denounced the "treason" of Vichy. In 19471 favored a revision of the Constitution or of constitutional procedure which the *Rassemblement du peuple français* professed to want. When the attempt of the RPF failed, the social republicans aggravated the faults of the regime, and I could neither associate myself with their action nor keep silent about its disastrous consequences. Perhaps such an attitude is contrary to the morality (or immorality) of political action; it is not contrary to the obligations of the writer.

If my criticisms seem to be directed primarily against the left, the fault may lie with the desire which motivates me to convince my friends. The fault also lies with the attitude adopted by the majority of leftists today, an attitude which I see as a betrayal of the "eternal" left.

The left came out of the movement of the Enlightenment. It places intellectual freedom above all else, it wants to tear down all Bastilles, it aspires to the simultaneous flowering of wealth, through the exploitation of

natural resources, and justice, through the decline of superstition and the reign of Reason. That prejudice in favor of the tyranny of a single party which elevates a pseudo-rationalist superstition into an official ideology is, in my opinion, the shame of the intellectuals of the left. Not only are they sacrificing the best part of the legacy of the Enlightenment—respect for reason, liberalism—but they are sacrificing it in an age when there is no reason for the sacrifice, at least in the West, since economic expansion in no sense requires the suppression of parliaments, parties, or the free discussion of ideas.

Here again, the critique of myths has an immediate positive function. How have the intellectuals been drawn into this denial?[6] Through the *monist* error: ultimately, the Marxist ignores politics; he decrees that the economically dominant class is by definition in possession of the power. The arrival of the proletariat to the rank of ruling class will be tantamount to the liberation of the masses. Having traced the origin of economic alienation to private ownership of the instruments of production, we arrive at the ludicrous conclusion that public ownership of the instruments of production and the omnipotence of one party are tantamount to the classless society, by a series of verbal equivalences (power of the party = power of the proletariat = abolition of private ownership = abolition of classes = human liberation).

Economic expansion, whether pursued by the Soviet method or the Western method, never guarantees a respect for political values. The increase of total wealth or even the reduction of economic inequalities implies neither the safeguarding of personal or intellectual freedom nor the maintaining of representative institutions. Indeed, as Tocqueville and Burckhardt saw clearly a century ago, societies without an aristocracy, motivated by the spirit of commerce and the boundless desire for wealth, are susceptible to the conformist tyranny of majorities and the concentration of power in a monstrous state. Whatever tensions may be created by the retardation of economic progress in France, the most difficult task from a long-range historical point of view is not to assure the increase of collective resources, but to stem the movement of mass societies toward tyranny.

I do not oppose those leftist intellectuals who demand the acceleration of economic growth in France. Although I am probably more aware than they are of the cost of growth, I am nevertheless in agreement with them in principle, as long as they are not fascinated by the Soviet model. I do condemn them for the partiality that prompts them always to take sides against the Westerners: though ready to accept Communism in the

underdeveloped countries to promote industrialization, they nevertheless remain hostile to the United States, which can give lessons in industrialization to all of us. When it is a question of the Soviet Union, economic progress justifies the destruction of national independence in Asia or even in Europe. When it is a question of European colonies, the right of peoples to self-determination is invoked in all its rigor. The semi-violent repression practiced by the Westerners in Cyprus or Africa is denounced ruthlessly, while the radical repression in the Soviet Union, with transfers of populations, is ignored or pardoned. The democratic freedoms are invoked against the democratic governments of the West, but their disappearance is excused when it is the work of a regime that calls itself proletarian.

Skepticism and Faith

Have I fully explained why *The Opium of the Intellectuals* is regarded as a negative book? Certainly not, and I see other reasons myself.

Many readers are irritated by what one of my adversaries at the *Centre des Intellectuels catholiques* has called "my dramatic dryness." I must confess to an extreme repugnance to reply to this type of argument. Those who let it be known that their own sentiments are noble and those of their adversaries selfish or base strike me as exhibitionists. I have never considered that there was any merit or difficulty in suffering or that sympathy for the misery of others was the prerogative of those who write for *Le Monde, Les Temps modernes, Esprit,* or *La Vie intellectuelle.* Political analysis gains by divesting itself of all sentimentality. Lucidity demands effort: passion automatically goes at a gallop.

I reproach Merleau-Ponty, to whom I feel so close, for having written against Sartre that "one doesn't get rid of poverty simply by hailing the revolution from afar." Of course one does not get rid of it so cheaply, but how are we privileged persons to discharge our debt? All my life I have only known one person whom the misery of others prevented from living: Simone Weil. She followed her path and ended in quest of sainthood. We whom the misery of men does not prevent from living—at least let it not prevent us from thinking. Let us not believe ourselves obliged to talk nonsense to bear witness to our noble sentiments.

Also, I refuse to pass those hasty judgments to which so many of my adversaries and even friends invite me. I refuse to say, with Mr. Duverger, that "the left is the party of the weak, the oppressed and the victims," for that

party, the party of Simone Weil, is neither to the right nor to the left; it is eternally on the side of the vanquished, and as everybody knows, Mr. Duverger does not belong to it. I refuse to say that "at the present time Marxism provides the only comprehensive theory of social injustice," for in that case the biologists would have to say that Darwinism as expounded by Darwin provides the only comprehensive theory of the evolution of the species. I refuse to denounce capitalism as such, or the bourgeoisie as such, to hold the "feudal lords" (which ones?) responsible for the errors committed in France over the past fifty years. Every society has a ruling class, and the party which is volunteering today to take over brings with it a society worse than the existing one. I consent to denounce social injustices but not social injustice itself, of which private ownership is alleged to be the major cause and Marxism the theory.

I am quite aware that Étienne Borne, who only wishes me well, reproaches me in a friendly way for "deploying an immense talent in order to explain with irrefutable reasons why things cannot be otherwise than what they are." It is true that I argue against utopianism more often than against conservatism. In France at the present time, the criticism of ideologies is one way of hastening reforms. On the level of philosophy, not of the daily paper, Etienne Borne as well as Father Leblond reproach me for not indicating in the foreseeable future the reconciliation of values which are temporarily incompatible. A strange reproach coming from Catholics who believe the world to be corrupted by sin!

It seems to me essential to reveal the plurality of considerations on which political or economic action must depend. I do not regard this plurality as incoherent. In the economic realm the concern for production and the concern for equitable distribution are not in the long run either contradictory or concordant. The reconciliation of justice with growth requires a compromise between equality and the adjustment of retribution to merit. The economic objective of a better living standard often comes into conflict with the political objective of power.

In the political realm it seems to me that the fundamental problem is to reconcile the participation of all men in the community with the diversity of tasks. Men have sought the solution to this antinomy in two ways. The first way is to proclaim the social and political equality of individuals in spite of the prestige of the functions performed by each. No doubt modern societies are the only ones to have extended universally the principle of equality which the ancient cities limited to citizens alone and which even the Roman Empire

did not extend either to slaves or to all conquered peoples. But the more democracy tries to restore to complex societies that economic and social equality which small, non-literate populations maintained with difficulty, the more apparent becomes the contrast between law and fact. Democratic societies and Soviet societies are doomed, albeit to different extents, to hypocrisy, because the weight of things does not permit them to effectively realize their ideal.

The second solution consists in sanctioning the inequality of conditions and rendering it acceptable by convincing all non-privileged persons that the hierarchy reflects a higher cosmic or religious order and that it does not impair the dignity or opportunity of the individual. The caste system is the extreme form of the inegalitarian solution which has, at its worst, given rise to horrors, but whose principle was not inherently hateful. Or at least if the inegalitarian solution is inherently imperfect, the other solution is too, at least as long as circumstances do not make it possible to realize it effectively.

Indeed, the religion of salvation has, throughout history, oscillated between two extremes. Either it has sanctioned or accepted the temporal inequalities by devaluating them: in comparison to the sole essential, the salvation of the soul, what importance have the things of this world, wealth and power? Or else it has denounced social and economic inequalities in the name of evangelical truth and solemnly called upon men to reorganize institutions in accordance with the precepts of Christ and the Church. Each of these two attitudes involves a danger to the authenticity of religion. The first runs the risk of leading to a kind of quietism, a complacent acceptance of injustices, and even the sanctification of the established order. The second, carried to its conclusion, would sustain the revolutionary impulse, since societies have, up to the present, been so incapable of giving their citizens that equality of condition or opportunity which is solemnly granted to souls.

The Christian socialists (and by inspiration, the progressists belong to this tradition) often have the conviction that they alone are capable of saving the Church from compromising itself with the established injustice, that they and they alone are faithful to the teachings of Christ. Churches, even churches of salvation, never entirely avoid relapsing into what Bergson called static religion. They are inclined to justify the powers which accord them a monopoly (or, in our time, certain privileges) in the realm of the administration of sacraments or the education of the young. The Christian, whose opinions are politically conservative, and the clergy, concerned about schools or convents, tend, in order to excuse a lack of concern for social

inequalities, to invoke the idea that the real match is not played in the political arena. At the other extreme the progressist carries historical hope—i.e., temporal hope—as far as it will go.

I shall refrain from choosing between these two attitudes: either, in its authentic expression, may legitimately call itself Christian. Perhaps the most profoundly Christian citizen would be one who experienced at every moment the tension between these two exigencies. He would never have the sense of having done enough for human justice, and yet he would feel that the results of this tireless effort were negligible and must appear as such in comparison with the only thing really at stake. He would be neither resigned to human misery nor forgetful of sin.

In our day in France the pendulum is swinging toward evangelical socialism, at least in the intellectual Catholic circles of the capital. The "hierarchy" is criticized for taking an exaggerated interest in the schools and for compromising itself with the "established disorder," to quote E. Mounier, in a vain effort to collect a few subsidies from the state. I have not taken sides in this debate, and there was no reason why I should. It makes no difference to me whether the Catholics vote for the left or for the right. What interests me is the fact that some Catholics are so attracted by the parties that promise the kingdom of God on earth that they forgive them for persecutions inflicted on Christians in China and eastern Europe.

I was quite surprised, at the *Centre des Intellectuals catholiques,* to hear a jesuit father, as far as possible from progressism, present the anticipation of the kingdom of God on earth as a hope, if not a belief, that was necessary. What is the definition of this kingdom of God? I am astonished at the facility with which Catholic thinkers are adopting the optimism of the Age of Enlightenment, amplified and vulgarized by Marxism. The attempt to outflank the Communists on the left strikes me as politically futile and, in terms of doctrine, if not of dogma, questionable. Besides, this technological optimism belongs to the avant-garde of yesterday rather than to that of today.

I have not even criticized this optimism as such; I have confined myself to tracing the steps by which one passes from the classless society—the materialist version of the kingdom of God on earth—to a theory of historical evolution, to one class, then to one party as the agent of salvation.

Finally, the stages of profane history—the succession of social regimes—are confused with the moments of sacred history, the dialogue of men (and of each man) with God. It is necessary and easy to mark the separation

between these two histories and to remember that anyone who believes totally in the first ceases for that very reason to believe in the second.

My friend Father Dubarle, in an intelligent article, begins by agreeing with me so closely that he considers the point too obvious to require proof. "Surely, then, history, the real and concrete history which presents itself at the level of human experience and reason, is not that secular substitute for divinity which has fascinated so many contemporary minds with its dream. All these things are very well said, and one feels, moreover, when one reflects, a certain surprise (a surprise which is shared by Mr. Aron) to find that there is such a need for them to be said in our day...." Then he suggests by means of subtle questions that the rigorous separations between temporal and eternal, profane and sacred may provide more apparent clarity than real light. I shall try, however, to reply to these questions which I am not sure I really understand.

"A Christian," he writes, "would therefore ask Mr. Aron whether he can accept the idea that a sermon about eternity tries also to confer, albeit in a subordinate and relative fashion, a humanly important significance to the temporal history of the human race." I have never dreamed of refusing "a humanly important significance to the temporal history of the human race." Not being a believer in the ordinary sense of the term, how could I have denied this importance without falling into out-and-out nihilism? The discussion does not concern "the importance of the temporal history"; the discussion concerns the truth of an interpretation of history that shows humanity advancing toward the classless society, with one class and one party playing the role of savior in this adventure. Once this mythology has been eliminated, temporal history remains important, but it ceases to obey either a pre-established determinism or a dialectic; it imposes on men tasks that are constantly being renewed and fundamentally permanent. Never will men finish subjecting the weight of institutions to the desire for justice.

Let us not go into the problem of clericalism or the role of the church in societies that reject a state religion: I have not dealt with this problem, to which Father Dubarle for some reason alludes. In twentieth-century France the Church accepts the fact that the state declares religion to be a "private affair." It no longer demands that the state impose by force the universal truth to which it continues, legitimately from its point of view, to lay claim; it consents to civic and political equality being accorded to nonbelievers. I do not believe that Father Dubarle is any less a partisan of secularity than myself.

Secularity does not reduce the Church to the administration of the sacraments or condemn her to silence in the realm or politics or economics. The Church wants to imbue the organization of the City with the Christian spirit. In this sense all Christians, and not progressist Christians alone, want to "introduce the eternal into the temporal." But they do not all think that this introduction leads, according to a deterministic, or dialectical order, to the kingdom of God on earth. But when I deny that the evolution is orderly or that the vision is ever total, I am immediately suspected of denying all significance to history and all commerce between the eternal and the temporal. Strange misunderstanding, or rather, one that reveals so much! Anyone who has understood the nature of men and societies knows that "Christianity" involves a secular effort and the acceptance of a role in the game of history. He also knows that this game is never entirely won, or in any case that profane history, economic or social history, will have no final fulfillment. Neither the Christian nor the rationalist therefore turns away from the temporal drama, for even if they know nothing about the future they do know the principles of a human society. If so many Catholics are afraid to renounce the historical dialectic it is because they too have lost their principles and, like the existentialists, look to myths for the certainties they lack.

The progressist Christians play among believers a role analogous to that of the existentialists among unbelievers. The latter incorporate fragments of Marxism into a philosophy of extreme individualism and quasi-nihilism because, denying any permanence to human nature, they oscillate between a lawless voluntarism and a doctrinairism based on myths. The progressist Christians refuse to judge regimes according to the conditions imposed on churches and are ready to attribute an almost sacred value to an economic technique, the class struggle, or a method of action. When I denounce the conversion of Kierkegaard's descendants to doctrinairism or the oscillation of the progressists between "revolutionarism" toward the liberal societies and "secular clericalism" favoring the Communist societies, I am accused of skepticism, as though the progressists possessed authentic faith, when they really contemplate schemes, models, and Utopias.

This skepticism is useful or harmful according to whether fanaticism or indifference is more to be feared; in any case it is philosophically necessary insofar as it will put an end to the ravages of abstract passions and bring men back to the elementary distinction between principles and judgments based on expediency. For want of principles both existentialists and progressist

Christians count on a class or a historical dialectic to provide them with conviction. Dogmatic when they should be prudent, the existentialists have begun by denying what they should have affirmed. They have no use for prudence, "the god of this lower world" (Burke); they invest the historical movement with reason after having divested it of man. The progressists attribute to Revolution that sacred quality which they are afraid of no longer finding in the life of the Church and the adventures of souls.

Is it, then, so difficult to see that I have less against fanaticism than I have against nihilism, which is its ultimate origin?

Notes

1. *Une philosophie de l'ambiguité,* p. 306, note.
2. This doctrine, which is axiomatic for the author of *L'Être et le néant,* cannot be attributed without reservation to the author of *La Phénoménologie de perception.*
3. One can find passages in which Marx foresaw that the revolution would break out in Russia, whose social and political structure was more fragile than that of the West. But this idea is difficult to reconcile with the classic framework of the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.*
4. It goes without saying that these three types of countries are not the only ones: I am presenting a simplified typology.
5. It would be worth reflecting on the significance of conservatism in an economically progressive society.
6. I shall omit the psychological reasons, conscious or unconscious, to which I alluded in *The Opium of the Intellectuals* and which provoked so much criticism. An intellectual of the left has the right to regard all businessmen and all right-wing writers as bigots or cynics. It is high treason to suggest that "interests" are not confined to one side, and Mr. Duverger does not hesitate to draw an idealized portrait of the intellectual whose sole concern is to defend the oppressed and combat injustice. The picture is edifying.

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Political Theory
Intellectual History
Sociology

THE OPIUM OF THE INTELLECTUALS

Raymond Aron

With a new introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield and a foreword by Daniel J. Mahoney and Brian C. Anderson

Raymond Aron's 1955 masterpiece, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, is one of the great works of twentieth-century political reflection. Aron shows how noble ideas can slide into the tyranny of "secular religion" and emphasizes how political thought has the profound responsibility of telling the truth about social and political reality—in all its mundane imperfections and tragic complexities.

Aron explodes the three "myths" of radical thought: the Left, the Revolution, and the Proletariat. Each of these ideas, Aron shows, are ideological, mystifying rather than illuminating. He also provides a fascinating sociology of intellectual life and a powerful critique of historical determinism in the classically restrained prose for which he is justly famous.

For this new edition, prepared by Daniel J. Mahoney and Brian C. Anderson as part of Transaction's ongoing "Aron Project," political scientist Harvey Mansfield provides a luminous introduction that underscores the permanent relevance of Aron's work. The new edition also includes as an appendix "Fanaticism, Prudence, and Faith," a remarkable essay that Aron wrote to defend *Opium* from its critics and to explain further his view of the proper role of political thinking. The book will be of interest to all students of political theory, history and sociology.

About the Authors

Raymond Aron was the foremost political and social theorist in post-World War II France. He authored more than forty books, including *Politics and History* and the two-volume *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, also available from Transaction.

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